

2. He resolves to continue instant in prayer, and the more so, because the deliverance was deferred, *ver. 13. unto thee have I cried many a time, and found comfort in it, and therefore I will continue to do so, in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee*; note, tho' our prayers be not answered presently, yet we must not therefore give over praying, because *the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak and not lye*. And God therefore delays the answer, that he may try our patience and perseverance in prayer. He resolves to seek God early, in the morning, when his spirits were lively, and before the business of the day began to crowd in; in the morning after he had been tossed with cares, and sorrowful thoughts in the silence and solitude of the night; but how doth he say, *my prayer shall prevent thee*? Not as if he could wake sooner to pray, than God to hear and answer, for he neither slumbers nor sleeps; but it intimates, that he would be up earlier than ordinary to pray; would prevent his usual hour of prayer. The greater our afflictions are, the more solicitous and serious we should be in prayer. My prayer shall present itself before thee, and be betimes with thee, and shall not stay for the encouragement of the beginning of mercy, but reach out towards it with faith and expectation, even before the day dawns. God often prevents our prayers and expectations with his mercies, let us prevent his mercies with our prayers and expectations.

3. He sets down what he will say to God in prayer.

1. He will humbly reason with God concerning the abject afflicted condition he was now in, *ver. 14. Lord, why castest thou off my soul*? What is it that provokes thee to treat me as one abandoned? *Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me*. He speaks it with wonder that God should cast off an old servant; should cast off one that was resolved not to cast him off: no wonder men cast me off, but Lord, why dost thou, whose gifts and callings are without repentance? *Why hidest thou thy face*? as one angry at me, that either hast no favour for me, or wilt not let me know it. Nothing grieves a child of God so much as God's hiding his face from him, nor is there any thing he so much dreads as God's casting off his soul. If the sun be clouded, that darkens the earth, but if the sun should abandon the earth, and quite cast it off, what a dungeon would it be?

2. He will humbly repeat the same complaints he had before made, until that God have mercy on him. Two things he represents to God as his grievances.

1. That God was a terror to him. *I suffer thy terrors*, *ver. 15*. He had continual frightful apprehensions of the wrath of God against him for his sins, and the consequences of that wrath. It terrified him to think of God, and of falling into his hands, appearing before him to receive his doom from him. He sweat and trembled at the apprehension of God's displeasure against him, and the terror of his majesty. Note, Even those that are designed for God's favours may yet for a time suffer his terror. The spirit of adoption is first a spirit of bondage to fear. Poor Job complained of the terrors of God setting themselves in array against him, *Job vi. 4*. The psalmist here explains himself, and tells us what he means by God's terrors, even his fierce wrath. Let us see what dreadful impressions those terrors made upon him, and how deep they wounded him. (1.) They had almost taken away his life; I am so afflicted with them, that I am ready to die, and as the word is, *to give up the ghost*. *Thy terrors have cut me off*, *ver. 16*. What is hell, that external excision, by which damned sinners are for ever cut off from God and all happiness, but God's terrors fastning and preying upon their guilty consciences. (2.) They had almost taken away the use of his reason; *when I suffer thy terrors I am distracted*; that sad effect the terrors of the Lord have had upon many, and some good men, who have thereby been put quite out of the possession of their own souls; a most piteous case, and which ought to be looked upon with great compassion. (3.) This had continued long, *from my youth up, I suffer thy terrors*; he had been from his child-hood afflicted with melancholy, and trained up in sorrow, under the discipline of that school. If we begin our days with trouble, and the days of our mourning have been prolonged a great while, let us not think it strange, but let tribulation work patience. It is observable that Heman, who became eminently wise and good, was *afflicted and ready to die from his youth up*, and suffered God's terrors; thus many have found it was good for them to bear the yoke in their youth; that sorrow has been much better for them than laughter would have been; and that being much afflicted, and often ready to die when they were young, they have by the grace of God got such an habitual seriousness, and weanedness from the world as has been of great use to them all their days. And sometimes those whom God designs for eminent services, are prepared for them by exercises of this kind. (4.) His affliction was now in extremity, and worse than ever. God's terrors now come round about him, so that from all sides he was assaulted with variety of troubles, and he had no comfortable gale from any point of the compass. They broke in upon him, together like an inundation of water; and this daily, and all the day; so that he had no rest, no respite, nor the least breathing time, no lucid intervals, nor any gleam of hope. Such was the calamitous state of a very wise and good

man, he was so surrounded with terrors that he could find no place of shelter, nor lie any where under the wind.

2. That no friend he had in the world was a comfort to him, *ver. 18. Lover and friend hast thou put far from me*; some are dead, others at a distance, and perhaps many unkind: Next to the comforts of religion are those of friendship and society; therefore to be friendless is (as to this life) almost to be comfortless; and to those who have had friends, but have lost them, the calamity is the more grievous; with this the psalmist here closeth his complaint, as if this were it that completed his wo; and gave the finishing strokes to this melancholy piece. If our friends are put far from us by scattering providences, nay, if by death our acquaintance are removed into darkness, we have reason to look upon it as a fore affliction, but must acknowledge and submit to the hand of God in it.

P S A L M LXXXIX.

Many psalms that begin with complaint and prayer, end with joy and praise, but this begins with joy and praise, and ends with sad complaints and petitions; for the psalmist first recounts God's former favours, and then with the consideration of them, aggravates the present grievances. It is uncertain when it was penned; only in general that it was at a time when the house of David was wofully eclipsed; some think it was at the time of the captivity of Babylon, when king Zedekiah was insulted over, and abused by Nebuchadnezzar, and then they make the title to signify no more, but that the psalm was set to the tune of a song of Ethan the son of Zerah, called Maschil; others suppose it to be penned by Ethan, who is mentioned in the story of Solomon, who outliving that glorious prince thus lamented the great disgrace done to the house of David in the next reign by the revolt of the ten tribes. 1. The psalmist in the joyful pleasant part of the psalm gives glory to God, and takes comfort to himself and his friends: And this he doth more briefly, mentioning God's mercy and truth, *ver. 1. and his covenant*, *ver. 2, 3, 4*. But more largely in the following verses, wherein (1.) He adores the glory and perfection of God, *ver. 5—14*. (2.) He pleaseth himself in the happiness of those that are admitted into communion with him, *ver. 15—18*. (3.) He builds all his hope upon God's covenant with David, as a type of Christ, *ver. 19—37*. 2. In the melancholy part of the psalm he laments the present calamitous state of the prince and royal family, *ver. 38—45*. Expostulates with God upon it, *ver. 46—49*. and concludes with prayer for redress, *ver. 50, 51*. In singing this psalm we must have high thoughts of God, a lively faith in his covenant with the Redeemer, and a sympathy with the afflicted parts of the church.

¶ Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite.

1. I WILL sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. 2. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens. 3. I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant. 4. Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.

The psalmist has a very sad complaint to make of the deplorable condition of the family of David at this time, and yet he begins the psalm with songs of praise; for we must in every thing, in every state, give thanks; thus we must glorify the Lord in the fire: We think when we are in trouble we get ease by complaining; but we do more, we get joy by praising. Let our complaints therefore be turned into thanksgiving; and in these verses we find that which will be matter of praise and thanksgiving for us in the worst of times, whether upon a personal or publick account.

1. However it be, the everlasting God is good and true, *ver. 1*. Tho' we may find it hard to reconcile present dark providences with the goodness and truth of God; yet we must abide by this principle, that God's mercies are inexhaustible, and his truth inviolable; and these must be the matter of joy and praise. *I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever*; sing a praising song to God's honour, a pleasant song for my own solace, and Maschil, an instructing song for the edification

edification of others. We may be for ever singing of God's mercies, and yet the subject will not be drawn dry. We must sing of God's mercies as long as we live, train up others to sing of them when we are gone, and hope to be singing of them in heaven world without end; and this is *singing of the mercies of the Lord for ever. With my mouth, and with my pen (for by that also we speak) will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations; assuring posterity from my own observation and experience, that God is true to every word that he hath spoken, that they may learn to put their trust in God, Psal. lxxviii. 6.*

2. However it be, the everlasting covenant is firm and sure, *ver. 2, 3, 4.* Here we have,

1. The psalmist's faith and hope: Things now look black, and threaten the utter extirpation of the house of David; but I have said, and I have warrant from the word of God to say it, that mercy shall be built up for ever. As the goodness of God's nature is to be the matter of our song; *ver. 1.* so much more the mercy that is built for us in the covenant. It is still increasing like a house in the building up; and shall still continue our rest for ever, like a house built up. It shall be built up for ever, for the everlasting habitations we hope for in the new Jerusalem, are of this building. If mercy shall be built for ever, then the *tabernacle of David which is fallen down, shall be raised out of its ruins, and built up as in the days of old, Amos ix. 11.* Therefore mercy shall be built up for ever, because *thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens: Tho' our expectations are in some particular instances disappointed, yet God's promises are not disannulled; they are established in the very heavens, i. e. in his eternal counsels; they are above the changes of this lower region, and out of the reach of the opposition of hell and the earth: And the stability of the material heavens is an emblem of the truth of God's word; the heavens may be clouded by vapours arising out of the earth, but they cannot be touched, they cannot be changed.*

2. An abstract of the covenant upon which this faith and hope is built. *I have said it, faith the psalmist, for God hath sworn it, that the heirs of promise might be entirely satisfied of the immutability of his counsel. He brings in God speaking, ver. 3. owning to the comfort of his people, I have made a covenant, and therefore will make it good. The covenant is made with David, the covenant of royalty is made with him, as the father of his family, and with his seed thro' him, and for his sake; representing the covenant of grace made with Christ as head of the church, and with all believers as his spiritual seed. David is here called God's chosen, and his servant. And as God is not changeable to recede from his own choice, so he is not unrighteous to cast off one that served him. Two things encourage the psalmist to build his faith on this covenant; (1.) The ratification of it; it was confirmed with an oath. The Lord has sworn, and he will not repent. (2.) The perpetuity of it; the blessings of the covenant were not only secured to David himself, but were entailed on his family; it was promised that his family should continue, Thy seed will I establish for ever, so that David shall not want a son to reign, Jer. xxxiii. 20, 21. And that it should continue a royal family, I will build up thy throne to all generations, to all the generations of time. This has its accomplishment only in Christ, of the seed of David, who lives for ever, to whom God has given the throne of his father David, and of the increase of whose government and peace of this there shall be no end. Of this covenant the psalmist will return to speak more largely, ver. 19, &c.*

5. And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O LORD: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints. 6. For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD? 7. God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints: and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him. 8. O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee? 9. Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them. 10. Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain; thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm. 11. The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world, and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them. 12. The north and the south thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name. 13. Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, and high is thy right-hand. 14. Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.

These verses are full of the praises of God. Observe, 1. Where and by whom God is to be praised.

(1.) God is praised by the angels above; *The heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord, ver. 5. i. e. the glorious inhabitants of the upper world continually celebrate thy praises: Bless the Lord, ye his angels, Psal. ciii. 20.* The works of God are wonders even to them, that are best acquainted, and most intimately conversant with them; God's works the more they are known, the more they are admired and praised. This should make us love heaven, and long to be there, that there we shall have nothing else to do but to praise God and his wonders.

(2.) God is praised by the assemblies of his saints on earth; *praise waits for him in Zion, and tho' they fall so far short of the praises of angels, yet God is pleased to take notice of them, and accept of them, and reckons himself honoured by them.* Thy faithfulness and the truth of thy promise, that rock on which the church is built, this shall be praised in the congregation of the saints, who owe their all to that faithfulness, and whose constant comfort it is, that there is a promise, and that he is faithful that has promised. It is expected from God's saints on earth that they praise him, who should, if they do not? Let every saint praise him, but especially the congregation of saints; when they come together, let them join in praising God; the more the better, it is the liker to heaven. Of the honour done to God by the assembly of the saints, he speaks again, *ver. 7. God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints; saints should assemble for religious worship, that they may publicly own their relation to God, and may stir up one another to give honour to him, and in keeping up communion with God, may likewise maintain the communion of saints. In religious assemblies God has promised the presence of his grace, but we must also in them have an eye to his glorious presence, that the familiarity we are admitted to may not breed the least contempt; for he is terrible in his holy places, and therefore greatly to be feared: A holy awe of God must fall upon us, and fill us in all our approaches to God, even in secret, to which something may very well be added by the solemnity of publick assemblies. God must be had in reverence of all that were about him, that attend him continually as his servants, or approach him upon any particular errand. See Lev. x. 3. Those only serve God acceptably, who serve him with reverence and godly fear, Heb. xii. 28.*

2. What it is to praise God; it is to acknowledge him to be a being of unparalleled perfection, such an one, as there is none like him, nor any to be compared with him, *ver. 6.* If there be any beings that can pretend to vie with God, sure they must be found among the angels; but they are all infinitely short of him, *who in the heaven can be compared with the Lord?* so as to challenge any share of that adoration and reverence which is due to him only, or to set up in rivalry with him for the homage of the children of men; they are sons of the mighty, but which of them can be likened unto the Lord? Nobles are princes peers, some parity there is between them, but none between God and the angels, they are not his peers. *To whom will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? faith the holy One, Isa. xl. 25.* This is insisted on again, *ver. 8. Who is a strong Lord like unto thee? No angel, no earthly potentate, whatsoever is comparable to God, or has an arm like him, or can thunder with a voice like him. Thy faithfulness is round about thee, i. e. thine angels that are round about thee, attending thee with their praises, and ready to go on thine errands, are all faithful. Or rather, in every thing thou dost on all sides, thou approvest thyself faithful to thy word, above whatever prince or potentate was. Among men it is too often found, that those who are most able to break their word, are less careful to keep it; but God is both strong and faithful; he can do every thing, and yet will never do an unjust thing.*

3. What we ought in our praises to give God the glory of. Several things are here mentioned.

1. The command God has of the most ungovernable creatures, *ver. 9. thou rulest the raging of the sea, than which nothing is more frightful or threatening, nor more out of the power of man to give check to; yet it can swell no higher, roll no further, beat no harder, continue no longer, nor do any more hurt than God suffers it. When the waves thereof arise, thou canst presently hush them asleep, still them, and make them quiet, and turn the storm into a calm: This coming in here as an act of omnipotence, what manner of man then was the Lord Jesus, whom the winds and seas obeyed?*

2. The victories God has obtained over the enemies of his church; his ruling the raging of the sea, and quelling its billows, was an emblem of this, *ver. 10. Thou hast broken Rahab, many a proud enemy; so it signifies, Egypt in particular, which is sometimes called Rahab, broken it in pieces, as one that is slain, and utterly unable to make head again. The head being broken, thou hast scattered the remainder with the arm of thy strength. God has more ways than one to deal with his and his church's enemies; we think, he should slay them presently, but sometimes he scatters them, that he may send them abroad to be monuments of his justice, Psal. li. 11. The remembrance of the breaking of Egypt in pieces, is a comfort to the church in reference to the present power of Babylon; for God is still the same.*

3. The

3. The incontestible property he has in all the creatures of the upper and lower world, *ver. 11, 12.* Men are honoured for their large possessions; but *the heavens are thine, O Lord, the earth also is thine*; therefore we praise thee, therefore we trust in thee, therefore we will not fear what man can do against us. *The world, and the fulness thereof*, all the riches contained in it; all the inhabitants of it, both the tenements and the tenants, they are all thine; for *thou hast founded them.* And the founder may justly claim to be the owner. He instanceth (1.) In the remotest parts of the world, the north and south, the countries that lie under the two poles, which are uninhabited, and little known, yet *thou hast created them*, and therefore knowest them, takest care of them, and hast tributes of praise from them. The north is said to be hung over the empty place, yet what fulness there is there, God is the owner of it. (2.) In the highest parts of the world; he instanceth in the two highest hills in Canaan, Tabor and Hermon, one lying to the west, the other to the east, these shall rejoice in thy name, for they are under the care of thy providence, and they produce offerings for thine altar; the little hills are said to rejoice in their own fruitfulness, *Psal. lxxv. 12.* Tabor is commonly supposed to be that high mountain in Galilee on the top of which Christ was transfigured; and then indeed it might be said to rejoice, in that voice which was there heard, *This is my beloved Son.*

4. That power and justice, that mercy and truth with which he governs the world, and rules in the affairs of the children of men, *ver. 13, 14.* (1.) God is able to do every thing; for he is the Lord God Almighty. His arm, his hand, is mighty and strong, both to save his people, and to destroy his and their enemies; none can either resist the force, or bear the weight of his mighty hand. *High is his right hand* to reach the highest, even those that *set their nests among the stars*, Amos ix. 2, 3. Obad. 4. *his right hand is exalted* in what he hath done, for in thousands of instances he hath signalized his power, *Psal. cxviii. 16.* (2.) He never did, nor ever will do, any thing that is either unjust or unwise; for *righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.* None of all his dictates or decrees ever varied from the rules of equity and wisdom, nor could ever any charge God with unrighteousness or folly. Justice and judgment are the preparing of his throne (so some) the establishment of it (so others); the preparations for his government in his counsels from eternity, and the establishment of it in its consequences to eternity, are all justice and judgment. (3.) He always doth that which is kind to his people, and consonant to the word which he hath spoken; mercy and truth shall go before thy face to prepare thy way, as harbingers to make room for thee. Mercy in promising, truth in performing; truth in being as good as thy word, mercy in being better. How praise-worthy are these in great men, much more in the great God, in whom they are perfection!

15. Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance. 16. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted. 17. For thou art the glory of their strength: and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted. 18. For the LORD is our defence: and the holy one of Israel is our king.

The psalmist having largely shewed the blessedness of the God of Israel, here shews the blessedness of the Israel of God. As there is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, so, happy art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee, O people, especially, as a type of the gospel Israel, consisting of all true believers, whose happiness is here described.

1. Glorious discoveries are made to them, and glad tidings of good brought to them; they hear, *they know, the joyful sound*, *ver. 15.* This alludes, either (1.) To the shout of a victorious army, the shout of a king, *Numb. xxiii. 21.* Israel has the tokens of God's presence with them in their wars; the sound of the going in the top of mulberry-trees, was indeed a joyful sound, 2 Sam. v. 24. and they often returned making the earth ring with their songs of triumph; these were joyful sounds. Or, (2.) To the sound that was made over the sacrifices, and on the solemn feast-day, *Psal. lxxxi. 1, 2, 3.* This was the happiness of Israel, that they had among them the free and open profession of God's holy religion, and abundance of joy in their sacrifices. Or, (3.) To the sound of the jubilee-trumpet; a joyful sound it was to servants and debtors, to whom it proclaimed release. The gospel is indeed a joyful sound; a sound of victory, of liberty, of communion with God, and the *sound of abundance of rain*; blessed is the people that hear it, and know it, and bid it welcome.

2. Special tokens of God's favour are granted them: *They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance*; they shall govern themselves by thy conduct, guided by thine eye; and they shall delight themselves in thy consolations; they shall have the favour
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of God, they shall know that they have it, and it shall be continual matter of joy and rejoycing to them: They shall go through all the exercises of a holy life under the powerful influences of God's loving-kindness, which shall make their duty pleasant to them, and make them sincere in it, aiming at this as their end, to be accepted of the Lord. We then walk in the light of the Lord, when we fetch all our comforts from God's favour, and are very careful to keep ourselves in his love.

3. They never want matter for joy; blessed are God's people, for in his name, in all that whereby he has made himself known, if it be not their own fault, *they shall rejoice all the day.* They that rejoice in Christ Jesus, and make God their exceeding joy, have enough to balance their grievances, and silence their griefs; and therefore their joy is full, 1 *Joh. i. 4.* and constant; it is their duty to rejoice evermore.

4. Their relation to God is their honour and dignity; they are happy, for they are high. *Surely in the Lord*, in the Lord Christ, *they have righteousness and strength*, and so are recommended by him to the divine acceptance; and therefore *in him shall all the seed of Israel glory*, Isa. xlv. 24, 25. And so it is here, *ver. 16, 17.* (1.) *In thy righteousness shall they be exalted*; and not in any righteousness of their own. We are exalted out of danger, and into honour, purely by the righteousness of Christ, which is a clothing both for dignity and for defence. (2.) Thou art the *glory of their strength*, i. e. thou art their strength, and it is their glory that thou art so, and what they glory in. *Thanks be to God who always causeth us to triumph.* (3.) In thy favour, which through Christ we hope for, *our horn shall be exalted*; the horn notes beauty, plenty, and power, these they have who are made accepted in the beloved. What greater preferment are men capable of in this world, than to be God's favourites.

5. Their relation to God is their protection and safety, *ver. 18.* *For our shield is of the Lord* (so the margin); and *our king is from the holy one of Israel.* If God be our ruler, he will be our defender; and who is he then that can harm us? It was the happiness of Israel, that God himself had the erecting of their bulwarks, and the nominating of their king (so some take it). Or, rather, that he was himself a wall of fire round about them, and as a holy one the author and centre of their holy religion; he was their king, and so their glory in the midst of them. Christ is the holy one of Israel, that holy thing; and in nothing was that peculiar people more blessed than in this, that he was born king of the Jews. Now this account of the blessedness of God's Israel comes in here as that to which it was hard to reconcile their present calamitous state.

19. Then thou spakest in vision to the holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty: I have exalted one chosen out of the people. 20. I have found David my servant: with my holy oyl have I anointed him. 21. With whom my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him. 22. The enemy shall not exact upon him: nor the son of wickedness afflict him. 23. And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him. 24. But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted. 25. I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers. 26. He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. 27. Also I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth. 28. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. 29. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. 30. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; 31. If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments: 32. Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. 33. Nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. 34. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. 35. Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. 36. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. 37. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah.

The covenant God made with David and his seed, was mentioned before, *ver. 3, 4.* but in these verses it is enlarged upon, and pleaded with God for favour to the royal family, now almost sunk and ruined; yet certainly it looks at Christ, and has its accomplishment in him much more than in David; nay, some passages here are scarce applicable at all to David, but must be understood

understood of Christ only; who is therefore called *David our king*, Hof. iii. 5. And very great and precious promises they are which are here made to the Redeemer, which are strong foundations for the faith and hope of the redeemed to build upon. The comforts of our redemption flow from the covenant of redemption, all our springs are in that; *Isa. lv. 3. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David*, Act. xiii. 34. Now here we have an account of those sure mercies. Observe;

1. What assurance we have of the truth of the promise, which may encourage us to build upon it. We are here told, (1.) How it was spoken, *ver. 19. Thou spakest in vision to thy holy One*. God's promise to David, which is especially referred to here, was spoken in vision to Nathan the prophet, *2 Sam. vii. 12—17. Then when the holy One of Israel was their king*, *ver. 18.* Then he appointed David to be his vice-roy. But to all the prophets, those holy ones, he *spake in vision* concerning Christ, and to him himself especially, who had lain in his bosom from eternity, and was made perfectly acquainted with the whole design of redemption, *Mat. xi. 27.* (2.) How it was sworn to, and ratified, *ver. 35. Once have I sworn by my holiness*, that darling attribute. In swearing by his holiness, he swore by himself, for as soon will he cease to be, as be otherwise than holy. His swearing once is enough, he needs not swear again as David did, *1 Sam. xx. 17.* For his word and oath are two immutable things. As Christ was made a priest, so he was made a king *by an oath*, *Heb. vii. 21.* For his kingdom and priesthood are both unchangeable.

2. The choice made of the person to whom the promise is given, *ver. 19, 20.* David was a king of God's own choosing, so is Christ, and therefore both are called God's kings, *Psal. ii. 6.* David was mighty, a man of courage, and fit for business; he was chosen out of the people; not out of the princes, but the shepherds, God found him out, exalted him, and laid help upon him, and ordered Samuel to anoint him. But this is especially to be applied to Christ; (1.) He is one that is mighty, every way qualified for the great work he was to undertake, *able to save to the uttermost*. Mighty in strength, for he is the Son of God, mighty in love, for he is able experimentally to compassionate those that are tempted. He is the *mighty God*, *Isa. ix. 6.* (2.) He is *chosen out of the people*, one of us, bone of our bone, that takes part with us of flesh and blood; being ordained for men, he is taken from among men, that his terror might not make us afraid. (3.) God has found him. He is a Saviour of God's own providing, for the salvation from first to last, is purely the Lord's doing. *He has found the ransom*, *Job xxxiii. 24.* For we could never have found a person fit to undertake this great work, *Rev. v. 3, 4.* (4.) God has *laid help upon him*; not only helped him, but treasured up help in him for us: laid it as a charge upon him to help fallen man up again, to help the chosen remnant to heaven: *In me is thy help*, *Hof. xiii. 9.* (5.) He has exalted him by constituting him the prophet, priest, and king of his church; clothing him with power, raising him from the dead, and setting him at his own right hand: Whom God chuseth and useth he will exalt. (6.) He has anointed him, has qualified him for his office, and so confirmed him in it, by giving him the Spirit, not by measure, but without measure, infinitely above his fellows. He is called Messiah, or Christ, the anointed. (7.) In all this he designed him to be his own servant, for the accomplishing of his eternal purpose, and the advancement of the interests of his kingdom among men.

3. The promises made to this chosen one, to David in the type, and the Son of David in the antitype; in which not only gracious, but glorious things are spoken of him.

1. With reference to himself, as king and God's servant: And what makes for him makes for all his loving subjects. It is here promised,

(1.) That God would stand by him and strengthen him in his undertaking, *ver. 21. with him my hand* not only shall be, but *shall be established* by promise, shall be so established, as that he shall by it be established and confirmed in all his offices, so as that none of them shall be undermined and overthrown, tho' by the man of sin they should all be usurped and fought against. Christ had a great deal of hard work to do, and hard usage to go through, but he that gave him commission, gave him forces sufficient for the execution of his commission. *Mine arm also shall strengthen him* to break through and bear up under all his difficulties. No good work can miscarry in the hand of those whom God himself undertakes to strengthen.

(2.) That he should be victorious over his enemies; that he should not encroach upon them; *ver. 22. The son of wickedness shall not exact upon him*, nor afflict him. He that at first broke the peace would set himself against him that undertook to make peace, and do what he could to blast his design, but he could only reach to bruise his heel, further he could not exact upon him or afflict him. Christ became a surety for our debt, and thereby Satan and death thought to have gained advantage against him, but he satisfied the demands of God's justice, and then they

could not exact upon him; *the prince of this world cometh, but he hath nothing in me*, *Joh. xiv. 30.* Nay, they not only shall not prevail against him, but they shall fall before him. *Ver. 23. I will beat down his foes before his face*, the prince of this world shall be cast out, principalities and powers spoiled, and he shall be the death of deaths itself, and the destruction of the grave, *Hof. xiii. 14.* Some apply this to the ruin which God brought upon the Jewish nation that persecuted Christ, and put him to death. Nay, and all Christ's enemies that hate him, and will not have him to reign over them shall be brought forth and slain before him, *Luk. xix. 27.*

(3.) That he should be the great trustee of the covenant between God and men. That God would be gracious and true to him, and in him be gracious and true to us, *ver. 24. My faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him*. It was with David, God continued merciful to him, and so approved himself faithful; it was with Christ; God made good all his promises to him; but that is not all, God's mercy to us, and his faithfulness to us are with Christ; he is not only pleased with him, but with us in him; and it is in him that all the promises of God are yea and amen. So that if any poor sinners hope for benefit by the faithfulness and mercy of God, let them know it is with Christ, it is lodged in his hand, and to him they must apply themselves for it, *ver. 28. My mercy will I keep for him*, to be disposed of by him *for evermore*; in the channel of Christ's mediation, all the streams of divine goodness will for ever run: And therefore it is *the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ* which we *look for unto eternal life*, *Jude 21. Joh. xvii. 2.* And as the mercy of God flows to us through him, so the promise of God is through him firm to us, *my covenant shall stand fast with him*, both the covenant of redemption made with him, and the covenant of grace made with us in him. The new covenant is therefore always new, and firmly established, because it is lodged in the hands of a Mediator, *Heb. viii. 6.* The covenant stands fast, because it stands upon this basis. And this redounds to the everlasting honour of the Lord Jesus, that to him the great cause between God and man is entirely referred, and the Father has committed all judgment to him; that *all men might honour him*, *Joh. v. 22, 23.* therefore it is here said, *In my name shall his horn be exalted*; this shall be his glory, that *God's name is in him*, *Exod. xxiii. 21.* and that he acts in God's name; *as the Father gave me commandment, so I do.*

(4.) That his kingdom should be greatly enlarged, *ver. 25. I will set his hand in the sea*, i. e. He shall have the dominion of the seas, and the isles of the sea, and *his right hand is in the rivers*, the inland countries that are watered with rivers. David's kingdom extended itself to the great sea, and the Red-sea, to the river of Egypt, and the river Euphrates. But it is in the kingdom of the Messiah, that this has its full accomplishment, and shall have more and more, when *the kingdoms of this world shall become as the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ*, *Rev. xi. 15.* and *the isles shall wait for his law.*

(5.) That he should own God as his father, and God would own him as his son, his first-born, *ver. 26, 27.* This is a comment upon these words in Nathan's message concerning Solomon, (for he also was a type of Christ as well as David) *2 Sam. vii. 14. I will be his father, and he shall be my son*, and the relation shall be owned on both sides. (1.) *He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father*. It is likely Solomon did so, but we are sure Christ did so, in the days of his flesh, when he offered up strong cries to God, and called him *holy Father, righteous Father*, and taught us to address ourselves to him as *our Father in heaven*. Christ in his agony cried unto God, *Thou art my Father*, *Matth. xxvi. 39, 42.* *O my Father*, and upon the cross, *Father, forgive them; Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*: He looked upon him likewise as his God, and therefore he perfectly obeyed him, and submitted to his will in his whole undertaking; he is *my God and your God*, *Joh. xx. 17.* And as the rock of his salvation, who would bear him up, and bear him out in his undertaking, and make him more than a conqueror, even a compleat Saviour, and therefore with an undaunted resolution he *endured the cross, despising the shame*, for he knew he should be both justified and glorified. (2.) *I will make him my first-born*. I see not how this can be applied to David, it is Christ's prerogative to be *the first-born of every creature*, and as such the *heir of all things*, *Col. i. 15.* *Heb. i. 2, 6.* when all power was given to Christ both in heaven and in earth, and all things were delivered unto him by the Father, then God made him his first-born, and far higher, more great and honourable, than the kings of the earth, for he is the King of kings, angels, authorities, and powers being made subject to him, *1 Pet. iii. 22.*

2. With reference to his seed. God's covenants always took in the seed of the covenanters, this doth so. *Ver. 29, 36. His seed shall endure for ever*, and with it his throne; now this will be differently understood according as we apply it to Christ or David.

1. If we apply it to David, by his seed we are to understand his successors, Solomon, and the following kings of Judah, that descended from the loins of David; it is supposed that they might degenerate, and not walk in the spirit and steps of their father David; in such a case they must expect to come under divine rebukes, such as the house of David was at this time under, *ver. 38.* But let this encourage them, that tho' they were corrected, they should not be abandoned or disinherited. This refers to that part of Nathan's message, *2 Sam. vii. 14, 15.* *If he commit iniquity, he will chasten him, but my mercy shall not depart from him.* Thus far David's seed and throne did endure for ever, that notwithstanding the wickedness of many of his posterity, who were the scandals of his house, yet his family continued, and continued in the imperial dignity a very long time; that as long as Judah continued a kingdom, David's posterity were kings of it, and the royalty of that kingdom was never in any other family, as that of the ten tribes was in Jeroboam's first, then in Baasha's, &c. And that the family of David continued a family of distinction, till that Son of David came, whose throne should endure for ever; see *Luke i. 27, 32.*—ii. 4, 11. If David's posterity, in after-times, should forsake God and their duty, and revolt to the ways of sin, God would bring desolating judgments upon them, and ruin the family; and yet he would not take away his loving-kindness from David, nor break his covenant with him, for in the Messiah who should come out of his loins, all these promises shall have their accomplishment to the full. Thus when the Jews were rejected; yet the apostle makes it out that God's covenant with Abraham was not broken, because it was fulfilled in his spiritual seed, the heirs of the righteousness of faith, *Rom. xi. 7.*

2. If we apply it to Christ by his seed, we are to understand his subjects, all believers, his spiritual seed; the children which God hath given him, *Heb. ii. 13.* This is that seed which shall be made to endure for ever, and his throne in the midst of them, in the church, in the heart *as the days of heaven.* To the end Christ shall have a people in the world to serve and honour him, *he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days.* And this holy seed shall endure for ever in a glorified state, when time and days shall be no more. And thus Christ's throne and kingdom shall be perpetuated; the kingdom of his grace shall continue through all the ages of time, and the kingdom of his glory to the endless ages of eternity.

1. The continuance of Christ's kingdom is here made doubtful by the sins and afflictions of his subjects, their iniquities and calamities threaten the ruin of it. This case is here put that we may not be offended when it comes to be a case in fact, but that we may reconcile it with the stability of the covenant, and be assured of that notwithstanding.

(1.) It is here supposed that there will be much amiss in the subjects of Christ's kingdom. It is possible his children may *forfake God's law*, *ver. 30.* by omissions, and *break his statutes*, *ver. 31.* by commissions. There are spots, that are the spots of God's children, *Deut. xxxii. 5.* Many corruptions there are in the bowels of the church, as well as in the hearts of those that are the members of it, and these corruptions break out.

(2.) They are here told that they must smart for it, *ver. 32.* *I will visit their transgression with the rod*, their transgression sooner than that of others; *you only have I known, and therefore I will punish you*, *Amos iii. 2.* Their being related to Christ, shall not excuse them from being called to an account. But observe what affliction is to God's people, (1.) It is but a rod, not an ax, not a sword; it is for correction, not for destruction. This notes gentleness in the affliction, it is the rod of men, such a rod as men use in correcting their children, and it notes a design of good in and by the affliction; such a rod as yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness. (2.) It is a rod in the hand of God, I will visit them. He that is wise and knows what he doth, gracious, and will do what is best. (3.) It is a rod which they shall never feel the smart of, but when there is great need. *If they break my law, then I will visit their transgression with the rod*, but not else. Then it is requisite that God's honour be vindicated, and that they be humbled and reduced.

2. The continuance of Christ's kingdom is made certain, by the inviolable promise and oath of God, notwithstanding all this, *ver. 33.* *Nevertheless, my kindness will I not totally and finally take from him.* (1.) Notwithstanding their provocations, yet my covenant shall not be broken. Note, Afflictions are not only consistent with covenant love, but to the people of God they flow from it. Tho' David's seed be chastened, it doth not follow that they are disinherited; they may be cast down, but they are not cast off. God's favour is continued to his people, (1.) For Christ's sake; in him the mercy is laid up for us, and God saith, *I will not take it from him*, *ver. 33.* I will not lie unto David, *ver. 35.* we are unworthy, but he is worthy. (2.) For the covenant sake. *My faithfulness shall not fail, my covenant will I not break.* It was supposed that they had broke God's statutes, profaned and polluted them, so the word signifies, but, saith God, I will not break, I will not profane and pollute my covenant. It

is the same word. That which is said and sworn, is, That God will have a church in the world, as long as sun and moon endure, *ver. 36, 37.* The sun and moon are faithful witnesses in heaven of the wisdom, power, and goodness, of the Creator, and shall continue while time lasts, which they are the measures of, but the *seed of Christ shall be established for ever*, as *lights of the world* while the world stands, to shine in it, and when it is at an end, they shall be established lights, shining in the firmament of the Father.

38. But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed. 39. Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant: thou hast profaned his crown, *by casting it to the ground.* 40. Thou hast broken down all his hedges, thou hast brought his strong holds to ruin. 41. All that pass by the way, spoil him: he is a reproach to his neighbours. 42. Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries: thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice. 43. Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword, and hast not made him to stand in the battle. 44. Thou hast made his glory to cease, and cast his throne down to the ground. 45. The days of his youth hast thou shortened: thou hast covered him with shame. *Selah.* 46. How long, LORD, wilt thou hide thy self for ever? shall thy wrath burn like fire? 47. Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? 48. What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? *Selah.* 49. Lord, where are thy former loving-kindnesses, *which thou swarest unto David in thy truth?* 50. Remember, LORD, the reproach of thy servant; *how I do bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people;* 51. Where-with thine enemies have reproached, O LORD; wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed. 52. Blessed be the LORD for evermore. Amen, and amen.

In these verses we have,

1. A very melancholy complaint of the present deplorable state of David's family, which the psalmist thinks hard to be reconciled to the covenant God made with David: Thou saidst thou wouldst not *take away thy loving-kindness, but thou hast cast off.* Sometimes, it is no easy thing to reconcile God's providences with his promises, and yet we are sure they are reconcilable, for God's works fulfil his word, and never contradict it.

(1.) David's house seemed to have lost its interest in God, which was the greatest strength and beauty of it. God had been pleased with his anointed, but now he was *wroth with him*, *ver. 38.* had entered into covenant with the family, but now for ought he could perceive he had made void the covenant, not broken some of the articles of it, but concealed it, *ver. 39.* we misconstrue the rebukes of providence, if we think they make void the covenant. When the great anointed one, Christ himself, was upon the cross, God seemed to have cast him off, and was wroth with him, and yet did not make void his covenant with him, for that was established for ever.

(2.) The honour of the house of David was lost and laid in the dust; *thou hast profaned his crown*, which was always looked upon as sacred, *by casting it to the ground*, to be trampled on, *ver. 39.* *Thou hast made his glory to cease*, so uncertain is all earthly glory, and so soon doth it wither, and *thou hast cast his throne down to the ground*, not only dethroned the king, but put a period to the kingdom; *ver. 44.* If it were penned in Rehoboam's time it was true, as to the greatest part of the kingdom, five parts of six; if in Zedekiah's time, it was more remarkably true of the poor remainder. Note, Thrones and crowns are tottering things, and are often laid in the dust, but there is a crown of glory reserved for Christ's spiritual seed, which fadeth not away.

(3.) It was exposed, and made a prey to all the neighbours, who insulted over that ancient and honourable family, *ver. 40.* *Thou hast broken down all his hedges*, all those things that were a defence to them, and particularly that hedge of protection, which they thought God's covenant and promise had made about them, and *thou hast made even his strong holds a ruin*, so that they were rather a reproach to them, than any shelter. And then, *ver. 41.* *All that pass by the way spoil him*, and make an easy prey of him, see *Psal. lxxx. 12, 13.* The enemies talk insolently, *he is a reproach to his neighbours*, who triumph in his fall from so great a degree of honour. Nay, every one helps forward the calamity;

calamity, *ver. 42.* *Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries,* not only given them power, but inclined them to turn their power this way. If the enemies of the church lift up their hand against it, if we must see God setting up their hand, for they could have no power unless it were given them from above. But when God doth permit them to do mischief to his church, it pleaseth them, *thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice;* and this for thy glory, that those who hate thee, should have the pleasure to see the tears and troubles of those that love thee.

(4.) It was disabled to help itself, *ver. 43.* *Thou hast turned the edge of his sword,* rebated it, and made it blunt, that it cannot do execution as it has done; and, which is worse, thou hast turned the edge of his spirit, and taken off his courage, and hast not made him to stand as he used to do in the battle. The spirit of men is what the Father and Former of spirits makes them, nor can we stand with any strength or resolution, farther than God is pleased to uphold us. If mens hearts fail them, it is God that dispirits them, but it is sad with the church when those cannot stand, that should stand up for it.

(5.) It was upon the brink of an inglorious exit, *ver. 45.* *The days of his youth hast thou shortened,* i. e. it is ready to be cut off, like a young man, in the flower of his age. This should intimate that it was penned in Rehoboam's time, when the house of David was but in the days of its youth, and yet waxed old, and began to decay already. And thus it was covered with shame, and it was turned very much to its reproach, that a family which in the first and second reign looked so great, and made such a figure, should in the third dwindle and look so little as the house of David did in Rehoboam's time. But it may be applied to the captivity in Babylon, which, in comparison with what was expected, were but the days of the youth of that kingdom. However, the kings then had remarkably the *day of their youth shortened*, for it was in the days of their youth, when they were about thirty years old, that Jehojachin and Zedekiah were carried captives to Babylon.

From all this complaint let us learn, (1.) What work sin makes with families, noble royal families, with families in which religion has been uppermost; when posterity degenerates, it falls into disgrace, and iniquity stains their glory. (2.) How apt we are to place the promised honour and happiness of the church in something external, and to think the promise fails, and the covenant made void, if we be disappointed of that, a mistake which we now are inexcusable if we fall into, since our Master hath so expressly told us, that his kingdom is not of this world.

2. A very patheticall expostulation with God upon this. Four things they plead with God for mercy.

1. The long continuance of the trouble, *ver. 46.* *How long, O Lord, wilt thou hide thy self for ever?* That which grieved them most, was, that God hid himself as one displeased, did not appear to them by his prophets to comfort them, did not appear for them by his providences to deliver them; and that he had kept them long in the dark; it seemed an eternal night when God, was withdrawn, thou hidest thy self for ever. Nay, God not only hid himself from them, but seemed to set himself against them, *shall thy wrath burn like fire,* i. e. how long shall it burn? shall it never be put out? what is hell, but the wrath of God, burning for ever? And is that the lot of thine anointed?

2. The shortness of life, and the certainty of death. Lord, let thine anger cease and return in mercy to us, remembering how short my time is, and how sure the period of my time. Lord, since my life is so transitory, and will ere long be at an end, let it not be always so miserable, as that I should rather choose no being at all, than such a being. Job pleads thus, *chap. x. 20, 21.* And probably, the psalmist here urgeth it in the name of the house of David, and the present prince of that house, the *days of whose youth were shortened*, *ver. 45.*

(1.) He pleads the shortness and vanity of life, *ver. 47.* *Remember how short my time is, how transitory I am,* say some; therefore unable to bear the power of thy wrath, and therefore a proper object of thy pity. *Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?* or, *unto what vanity hast thou created all the sons of Adam?* Now, this may be understood either, (1.) As speaking a great truth. If the ancient loving-kindnesses spoken of, *ver. 49.* be forgotten, those relating to another life, man is indeed made in vain; considering man as mortal, if there were not a future state on the other side; besides, we might be ready to think man was made in vain, and was in vain endued with the noble powers and faculties of reason, and filled with such vast designs, and desires; but God would not make man in vain, therefore, Lord, *remember those loving kindnesses.* Or, (2.) As speaking a strong temptation that the psalmist was in. It is certain, *God has not made all men,* nor any man, *in vain*, *Isa. xlv. 14.* For, (1.) If we think that God hath made man in vain, because so many have short lives, and long afflictions in this world, it is true that God has made them so, but it is not true, that therefore they are made in vain. For those whose days are few and full of trouble, yet may glorify God, and do some good, may keep their communion with God, and get to heaven, and then they are not made in vain. (2.) If we think that God has made men in vain, because the most of men neither serve

him, nor enjoy him, it is true, that as to themselves, they were made in vain, better for them they had not been born, than not to be born again; but it was not long of God, that they were made in vain, it was long of themselves; nor are they made in vain as to him; for he has *made all things for himself, even the wicked for the day of evil*, and those whom he is not glorified by, he will be glorified upon.

(2.) He pleads the universality and unavoidableness of death, *ver. 48.* *What man (what strong man, so the word is) is he that liveth, and shall not see death!* The king himself, of the house of David, is not exempted from the sentence, from the stroke: Lord, since he is under a fatal necessity of dying, let not his whole life be made thus miserable. *Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?* No, he shall not when his time is come: Let him not therefore be delivered into the hand of the grave, by the miseries of a dying life, till his time is come. We must learn here, that death is the end of all men; our eyes must shortly be closed to see death; there is no discharge from that war, nor will any bail be taken to save us from the prison of the grave: It concerns us therefore to make sure a happiness on the other side of death and the grave, that *when we fail, we may be received into everlasting habitations.*

3. The next plea is taken from the kindness God had for, and the covenant he made with, his servant David, *ver. 49.* *Lord, where are thy former loving kindnesses,* which thou shewedst, nay, which thou swearest, to David in thy truth. Wilt thou fail of doing what thou hast promised? Wilt thou undo what thou hast done? Art not thou still the same? Why then may not we have the benefit of the former sure mercies of David? God's unchangeableness and faithfulness assure us, that God will not cast off those whom he hath chosen and covenanted with.

4. The last plea is taken from the insolence of the enemies, and the indignity done to God's anointed; *ver. 50, 51.* *Remember, Lord, the reproach,* and let it be rolled away from us, and returned upon our enemies. (1.) They were God's servants that were reproached, and the abuses done to them, reflected upon their Master, especially since it was for serving him, that they were reproached. (2.) The reproach cast upon God's servants was a very grievous burthen to all that were concerned for the honour of God; *I bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people*, and am even overwhelmed with it; it is what I lay much to heart, and can scarce keep up my spirits under the weight of. (3.) They are thine enemies who do thus reproach us, and wilt thou not appear against them as such? (4.) They have *reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.* They reflected upon all the steps which the king had taken in the course of his administration, tracked him in all his motions, that they might make invidious remarks upon every thing he had said and done. Or, if we may apply it to Christ the Lord's Messiah, they reproached the Jews with his footsteps, the slowness of his coming. They have reproached the delays of the Messiah, so Dr. Hammond: They called him, *He that should come*, but because he was not yet come, because he did not now come to deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, when they had none to deliver them, they told them, he would never come, they must give over looking for him. The scoffers of the latter days do in like manner reproach the footsteps of the Messiah when they ask, *Where is the promise of his coming?* 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4. The reproaching of the footsteps of the anointed, some refer to the serpent's *bruising of the heel of the seed of the woman*: Or, to the sufferings of Christ's followers that tread in his footsteps, and are reproached for his name's sake.

Lastly, The psalm concludes with praise, even after this sad complaint, *ver. 52.* *Blessed be the Lord for evermore, Amen, and amen.* Thus he confronts the reproaches of his enemies; the more others blaspheme God, the more we should bless him. Thus he corrects his own complaints, chiding himself for quarrelling with God's providences, and questioning his promises; let both these sinful passions be silenced with the praises of God: However it be, yet God is good, and we will never think hardly of him; God is true, and we will never distrust him. Tho' the glory of David's house be stained and sullied, this shall be our comfort, that God is blessed for ever, and his glory cannot be eclipsed. If we would have the comfort of the stability of God's promise, we must give him the praise of it, in blessing God we encourage our selves. Here is a double *amen*; according to the double signification *amen*, so it is, God is blessed for ever, *amen*; be it so; Let God be blessed for ever. He began the psalm with thanksgiving, before he made his complaint, *ver. 1.* And now he concludes it with a doxology. They that give God thanks for what he has done, may give him thanks also for what he will do; God will follow those with his mercies, that in a right manner follow him with their praises.

P S A L M XC.

The foregoing psalm was supposed to be penned as late as the captivity in Babylon; this, it is plain, was penned as early as the deliverance out of Egypt, and yet they are put close together in this collection of divine songs. This psalm was penned by Moses, as appears by the title, the most ancient penman of sacred writ. We have upon record a praising song of his, Exod. xv. which is alluded to Rev. xv. 3. and an instructing song of his, Deut. xxxii. But this is of a different nature from both, for it is called a prayer. It is supposed that this psalm was penned upon occasion of the sentence past upon Israel in the wilderness for their unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion, that their carcases should fall in the wilderness, that they should be wasted away by a series of miseries for thirty-eight years together, and none of them that were then of age should enter Canaan. This was calculated for their wanderings in the wilderness, as that other song of Moses, Deut. xxxi. 19, 21. was for their settlement in Canaan. We have the story, to which this psalm seems to refer, Numb. xiv. Probably, Moses penned this prayer to be daily used, either by the people in their tents, or, at least, by the priests in the tabernacle service, during that tedious fatigue of theirs in the wilderness. In it, 1. Moses comforts himself and his people with the eternity of God, and their interest in him however, ver. 1, 2. 2. He humbles himself and his people with the consideration of the frailty of man, ver. 3—6. 3. He submits himself and his people to the righteous sentence of God passed upon them, ver. 7—11. 4. He commits himself and his people to God, by prayer, for divine mercy and grace, and the return of God's favour, ver. 12—17. Though it seems to have been penned upon this particular occasion, yet it is very applicable to the frailty of human life in general, and, in singing of it, we may easily apply it to the years of our passage through the wilderness of this world, and it furnisheth us with meditations and prayers very suitable to the solemnity of a funeral.

A prayer of Moses the man of God.

1. **L**ORD, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. 2. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world: even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. 3. Thou turnest man to destruction: and sayest, Return ye children of men. 4. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday, when it is past, and as a watch in the night. 5. Thou carriest them away as with a flood, they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. 6. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.

This psalm is entitled a prayer of Moses, where, and in what volume, it was preserved from Moses's time till the collection of psalms begun to be made, is uncertain; but, being divinely inspired, it was under a special protection: perhaps, it was written in the book of Jasher, or the book of the wars of the Lord. Moses taught the people of Israel to pray, and put words into their mouths, which they might make use of in turning to the Lord. Moses is here called the man of God, because he was a prophet, the father of the prophets, and an eminent type of the great Prophet.

In these verses we are taught,

1. To give God the praise of his care concerning his people at all times, and concerning us in our days, ver. 1. Lord, thou hast been to us a habitation, or dwelling-place; a refuge, or help, in all generations. Now they were fallen under God's displeasure, and he threatened to abandon them, they plead his former kindnesses to their ancestors. Canaan was a land of pilgrimage to their fathers, the patriarchs, who dwelt there in tabernacles; but then God was their habitation, and, wherever they went, they were at home at rest in him. Egypt had been a land of bondage to them for many years, but even then God was their refuge; and in him that poor oppressed people lived, and were kept in being. Note, True believers are at home in God, and that is their comfort, in reference to all the toils and tosses they meet with in this world. In him we may repose and shelter our selves, as in our dwelling-place.

2. To give God the glory of his eternity, ver. 2. Before the mountains were brought forth, before he made the highest part of the dust of the world, as it is expressed, Prov. viii. 26. before the earth fell in travail, or, as we may read it, before thou hadst formed the earth and the world, i. e. before the beginning of time thou hadst a being, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God: an eternal God, whose existence hath neither its commencement, nor its period, with time, nor is measured by the successions and revolutions of it; but who art the same yesterday, to day, and for ever, without beginning of days, or end of life, or change of time. Note, Against all the grievances that arise from our own mortality, and the mortality of our friends, we may take comfort from God's immortality; we are dying creatures, and all our comforts in the

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world are dying comforts, but God is an everliving God, and they shall find him so that have him for theirs.

3. To own God's absolute sovereign dominion over man; and his irresistible, uncontestable power to dispose of him as he pleaseth, ver. 3. Thou turnest man to destruction, with a word's speaking, when thou pleasest, to the destruction of the body, of the earthly house, and thou sayest, Return ye children of men. 1. When God is by sickness, or other afflictions, turning men to destruction; he doth thereby call men to return unto him, that is, to repent of their sins, and live a new life. This God speaketh once, yea twice, Return unto me, from whom ye have revolted, Jer. iv. 1. 2. When God is threatening to turn men to destruction, to bring them to death, and they have received a sentence of death within themselves, sometimes he wonderfully recovers them, and faith, or as the old Translation reads it, Again thou sayest, Return, to life and health again. For God kills, and makes alive again, brings down to the grave, and brings up. 3. When God turns men to destruction, it is according to the general sentence past upon all; which is this, Return ye children of men, one as well as another; return to your first principles; let the body return to the earth as it was, (dust to dust, Gen. iii. 19.) and let the soul return to God who gave it. Eccl. xii. 7. 4. Though God turns all men to destruction, yet he will again say, Return ye children of men, viz. at the general resurrection, when, though a man dies, yet he shall live again; and then shalt thou call, and I will answer Job xiv. 14, 15. thou shalt bid me return, and I shall return. The body, the soul; shall both return and unite again.

4. To acknowledge the infinite disproportion there is between God and men, ver. 4. The patriarchs, some of them, lived near a thousand years, Moses knew it very well, and had recorded it: but what is their long life to God's eternal life? A thousand years to us is a great deal, it is what we cannot expect to come near to, or, if we could, it is what we could not retain the remembrance of; but it is in thy sight as yesterday, as one day, as that which is freshest in mind; nay, it is but as a watch of the night, which was but three hours. 1. A thousand years are nothing to God's eternity, they are less than a day, than an hour to a thousand years; betwixt a minute and a million of years there is some proportion, but betwixt time and eternity there is none. The long lives of the patriarchs were nothing to God, not so much as the life of a child that is born and dies the same day, is to theirs. 2. All the events of a thousand years, whether past or to come, are as present to the eternal Mind, as what was done yesterday, or the last hour is to us, and more too. God will say at the great day, to those whom he has turned to destruction, return, arise ye dead. But it might be objected against the doctrine of the resurrection, that it is a long time since it was expected, and it is not yet come. Let that be no difficulty, for a thousand years in God's sight, are but as one day. Nullum tempus occurrit regi. To this purpose these words are quoted, 2 Pet. iii. 8.

5. To see the frailty of man, and his vanity, even at his best estate, ver. 5, 6. look upon all the children of men, and we shall see, 1. That their life is a dying life; Thou carriest them away as with a flood, i. e. they are continually gliding down the stream of time into the ocean of eternity; the flood is continually flowing, and they are carried away with it; as soon as we are born we begin to die, and every day of our life carries us so much nearer death; or, we are carried away violently and irresistibly, as with a flood of waters, as with an inundation, which sweeps away all before it; or, as the old world was carried away with Noah's flood. Though God promised not so to drown the world again, yet death is a constant deluge. 2. That it is a dreaming life. Men are carried away as with a flood, and yet they are as a sleep; they consider not their own frailty, nor are aware how near they approach to an awful eternity. Like men asleep, they imagine great things to themselves, till death wakes them, and puts an end to the pleasing dream. Time passeth unobserved by us, as it doth with men asleep, and when it is over it is as nothing. 3. That it is a short and transient life, like that of the grass which grows up and flourisheth in the morning, looks green and pleasant, but in the evening the mowers cut it down, and it withers presently; changes its colour, and loses all its beauty. Death will change us shortly, perhaps suddenly, and it is a great change that death will make with us in a little time. Man, in his prime, doth but flourish as the grass, which is weak and low, and tender, and exposed; and which, when the winter of old age comes, will wither of it self: but it may be mown down by disease or disaster, as the grass is, in the midst of summer. All flesh is as grass.

7. For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. 8. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. 9. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. 10. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow: for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. 11. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.

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Moses

Moses had in the foregoing verses lamented the frailty of human life in general; the children of men *are as a sleep, and as the grass*: but here he teacheth the people of Israel to confess before God that righteous sentence of death which they were under in a special manner, and which by their sins they had brought upon themselves; their share in the common lot of mortality was not enough, but they are, and must live and die, under peculiar tokens of God's displeasure: here they speak of themselves; *we Israelites are consumed and troubled, and our days are passed away.*

1. They are here taught to acknowledge the wrath of God to be the cause of all their miseries; *we are consumed, we are troubled, and it is by thine anger, by thy wrath, ver. 7. our days are passed away in thy wrath, ver. 9.* The afflictions of the saints oft come purely from God's love, as Job's; but the rebukes of sinners, and of good men for their sins, must be seen coming from the anger of God, who takes notice of, and is much displeased with the sins of Israel. We are too apt to look upon death, as no more but a debt owing to nature; whereas it is not so; if the nature of man had continued in its primitive purity and rectitude, there had been no such debt owing to it; it is a debt to the justice of God, a debt to the law. *Sin entered into the world, and death by sin.* Are we consumed by duties of nature, the infirmities of age, or any chronical disease? we must ascribe it to God's anger. Are we troubled by any surprizing stroke? that also is the fruit of God's wrath, which is thus revealed from heaven against the *ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.*

2. They are taught to confess their sins, which had provoked the wrath of God against them, *ver. 8. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, even our secret sins.* It was not without cause that God was angry with them, he hath said, *Provoke me not, and I will do you no hurt*; but they had provoked him, and will own that in passing this severe sentence upon them, he justly punished them; 1. For their open contempts of him, and the daring affronts they had given him. *Thou hast set our iniquities before thee.* God had herein an eye to their unbelief and murmuring, their distrusting his power, and their despising the pleasant land; these he set before him, when he passed that sentence on them: these kindled the fire of God's wrath against them, and kept good things from them. 2. For their more close departures from him; *Thou hast set our secret sins,* those that go no further than the heart, and which are at the bottom of all the overt acts, thou hast set these *in the light of thy countenance.* i. e. thou hast discovered those, and brought these also to the account, and made us to see them, who before over-looked them. Secret sins are known to God, and shall be reckoned for. Those that in heart return into Egypt, that set up idols in their heart, shall be dealt with as revolvers or idolaters. See the folly of those that go about to cover their sins, for they cannot cover them.

3. They are taught to look upon themselves as dying and passing away, and not to think either of a long life, or of a pleasant one; for the decree gone forth against them was irreverfible, *ver. 9. All our days are like to be passed away in thy wrath, i. e. under the tokens of thy displeasure; and though we are not quite deprived of the residue of our years, yet we are likely to spend them as a tale that is told.* The thirty-eight years, which after this they were away in the wilderness, were not the subject of the sacred history, for little or nothing is recorded of that which happened to them from the second year to the fortieth. After they came out of Egypt, their time was perfectly trifled away, and was not worthy to be the subject of a history, but only of *a tale that is told*; for it was only to pass away time like telling stories, that they spent those years in the wilderness; all that while they were in the consuming, and another generation was in the raising. When they came out of Egypt, *there was not one feeble person among their tribes,* Psalm cv. 37. but now they were all feeble. Their joyful prospect of a prosperous glorious life in Canaan was turned into the melancholy prospects of a tedious inglorious death in the wilderness; so that their whole life was now as impertinent a thing as ever any winter tale was. That is applicable to the state of every one of us in the wilderness of this world; *we spend our years, we bring them to an end, each year, and all at last, as a tale that is told: as the breath of our mouth in winter, so some, which soon disappears: as a thought, so some, than which nothing more quick; as a word, which is soon spoken, and then vanisheth into air: or, as a tale that is told.* The spending of our years is like the telling of a tale. A year when it is past is like a tale when it is told. Some of our years are as a pleasant story, others as a tragical one; most mixt, but all short and transient: that which was long in the doing, may be told in a short time. Our years when they are gone, can no more be recalled, than the word that we have spoken can. The loss and waste of our time, which is our fault and folly, may be thus complained of; we should spend our years like the dispatch of business, with care and industry, but, alas! we do spend them like the telling of a tale, idle, and to little purpose, mindlessly, and without regard.

Every year passed *as a tale that is told*; but what was the number of them? As they were vain, so they were few, *ver. 10. seventy or eighty at most, which may be understood, either, 1. Of the lives of the Israelites in the wilderness; all those that were numbered when they came out of Egypt, above twenty years old, were*

to die within thirty-eight years; they numbered those only that *were able to go forth to war*, most of whom, we may suppose, were between twenty and forty, who therefore must all die before eighty years old, and many before sixty, and, perhaps, much sooner, which was far short of the years of the lives of their fathers. And those that lived to seventy or eighty, yet being under a sentence of consumption, and a melancholy despair of ever seeing through this wilderness state, their strength, their life, was nothing but *labour and sorrow*, which otherwise would have been made a new life, by the joys of Canaan. See what work sin made. Or, 2. To the lives of men in general, ever since the days of Moses. Before Moses it was ordinary for men to live about an hundred years, or near an hundred and fifty; but since, seventy or eighty is the common stint, which few exceed, and multitudes never come near. We reckon those to have lived to the age of man, and to have had as large a share of life as they had reason to expect, who live to be seventy years old; and how short a time is that compared with eternity! Moses was the first that committed divine revelation to writing, which before had been transmitted by tradition; now also both the world and the church were pretty well peopled, and therefore there were not now the same reasons for mens living long that there had been. If, by reason of a strong constitution, some reach to eighty years, yet their strength then is what they have little joy of, it doth but serve to prolong their misery, and make their death the more tedious; for even *their strength then is labour and sorrow*, much more their weakness; for the years are come which they have no pleasure in. Or, it may be taken thus: *Our years are seventy, and the years of some, by reason of strength, are eighty; but the breadth of our years* (for so the latter word signifies, rather than strength) *the whole extent of them, from infancy to old age, is but labour and sorrow.* In the sweat of our face we must eat bread, our whole life is toilsome and troublesome; and, perhaps, in the midst of the years we count upon, *it is soon cut off, and we fly away, and do not live out half our days.*

4. They are taught by all this to stand in awe of the wrath of God, *ver. 11. Who knows the power of thine anger?* 1. None can perfectly comprehend it. The psalmist speaks as one afraid of God's anger, and amazed at the greatness of the power of it; who knows how far the power of God's anger can reach, and how deep it can wound? The angels that sinned knew experimentally the power of God's anger: damned sinners in hell know it; but which of us can fully comprehend or describe it? 2. Few do seriously consider it as they ought. *Who knows it*, so as to improve the knowledge of it? Those that make a mock at sin, and make light of Christ, surely do not know the power of God's anger. For *according to thy fear, so is thy wrath*, i. e. God's wrath is equal to the apprehensions which the most thoughtful, serious people have of it: let men have never so great a dread upon them of the wrath of God, it is not greater than there is cause for, and than the nature of the thing deserves. God has not in his word represented his wrath more terrible than really it is; nay, what is felt in the other world, is infinitely worse than what is feared in this world. *Who among us can dwell with that devouring fire?*

12. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. 13. Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. 14. O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice, and be glad all our days. 15. Make us glad according to the days *wherein* thou hast afflicted us; and the years *wherein* we have seen evil. 16. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. 17. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us, yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

These are the petitions of this prayer, grounded upon the foregoing meditations and acknowledgments. *Is any afflicted? let him learn thus to pray.*

Four things they are here directed to pray for.

1. For a sanctified use of the sad dispensation they were now under. Being condemned to have our days shortened, *Lord, teach us to number our days*, *ver. 12. i. e. Lord, give us grace duly to consider how few they are, and how little a while we have to live in this world.* Note, 1. It is an excellent art rightly to *number our days*, so as not to be out in our calculation, as he was, who counted upon many years to come, when that night his soul was required of him. We must live under a constant apprehension of the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the near approach of death and eternity. We must so number our days, as to compare our work with them, and mind it accordingly with a double diligence, as those that have no time to trifle. 2. Those that would learn this doctrine arithmetick must pray for divine instruction; must go to God, and beg of him to teach them, by his Spirit to put them upon considering, and to give them a good understanding. 3. We then number our days to good purpose, when thereby our hearts are inclined and engaged to true wisdom, that is, to the practice of serious godliness. To be religious is to be wise; this is a thing to which it is necessary that we apply our hearts, and the matter requires

quires and deserves a close application, to which frequent thoughts of the uncertainty of our continuance here, and the certainty of our removal hence will very much contribute.

2. For the turning away of God's anger from them; that though the decree was gone forth, and was past revocation, there was no remedy, but they must die in the wilderness, yet *return O Lord, be thou reconciled to us, and let it repent thee concerning thy servant*, ver. 13. send us tidings of peace to comfort us again after these heavy tidings. How long must we look upon our selves as under thy wrath, and when shall we have some token given us of our restoration to thy favour? *We are thy servants, thy people*, Isa. lxiv. 9. When wilt thou change thy way towards us? In answer to this prayer, and upon their profession of repentance, (Num. xiv. 39, 40.) God in the next chapter proceeded with the laws concerning sacrifices, Num. xv. 1, &c. which was a token that it repented him concerning his servants, for *if the Lord had been pleased to kill them he would not have shewed them such things as these*.

3. For comfort and joy in the returns of God's favour to them, ver. 14, 15. They pray for the mercy of God, for they pretend not to plead any merit of their own; *have mercy upon us, O God*, is a prayer we are all concerned to say *Amen* to. Let us pray for early mercy, the seasonable communications of divine mercy: That *God's tender mercies may speedily prevent us, early in the morning of our days*, when we are young and flourishing, ver. 6. Let us pray for that true satisfaction and happiness which is to be had only in the favour and mercy of God; *Psal. iv. 6, 7*. A gracious soul, if it may but be satisfied of God's loving-kindness, will be satisfied with it, abundantly satisfied; will take up with that, and will take up with nothing short of it. Two things are pleaded to enforce this petition for God's mercy.

(1.) That it would be a full fountain of future joys? *O satisfy us with mercy*, not only that we may be easy and at rest within ourselves, which we can never be, while we lie under thy wrath; but that we *may rejoice and be glad*, not only for a time upon the first indications of thy favour, but all our days, though we are to spend them in the wilderness. Those that make God their chief joy, as their joy may be full, 1 *Joh. i. 4*. so it may be constant, even in this veil of tears; it is their own fault if they are not glad all their days, for his mercy will furnish them with joy in tribulation, and nothing can separate them from it. (2.) That it would be a sufficient balance to their former griefs. *Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us*; let the days of our joy in thy favour, be as many as the days of our pain for thy displeasure have been, and as pleasant as those have been gloomy. *Lord, thou usest to set the one over against the other*, Eccl. vii. 14. do so in our case; let it suffice that we have drunk so long of the cup of trembling, now put into our hands the cup of salvation. God's people reckon the returns of God's loving-kindness, a sufficient recompence for all their troubles.

4. For the progress of the work of God among them notwithstanding, ver. 16, 17. (1.) That he would manifest himself in carrying it on. *Let thy work appear upon thy servants*, let it appear that thou hast wrought upon us, to bring us home to thyself, and to fit us for thy self. God's servants cannot work for him, unless he work upon them, and work in them, both to will and to do. And then we may hope the operations of God's providence will be apparent for us, when the operations of his grace are apparent upon us. Let thy work appear, and in it thy glory will appear to us, and those that shall come after us. In praying for God's grace, God's glory must be our end; and we must therein have an eye to our children as well as to ourselves, that they also may experience God's glory appearing upon them, so as to change them into the same image, from glory to glory. Perhaps, in this prayer, they distinguish between themselves and their children, for so God distinguished in his late message to them, Num. xiv. 31. *Your carcases shall fall in this wilderness, but your little ones will I bring into Canaan*; Lord, say they, let thy work appear upon us, to reform us, and bring us to a better temper, and then let thy glory appear to our children, in performing the promise to them which we have forfeited the benefit of. (2.) That he would countenance and strengthen them in carrying it on; in doing their part towards it. 1. That he would smile upon them in it. *Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us*, i. e. let it appear that God favours us: Let us have God's ordinances kept up among us, and the tokens of God's presence with his ordinances, (so some.) We may apply this petition both to our sanctification, and to our consolation; *Holiness is the beauty of the Lord our God*, let that be upon us in all we say and do; let the grace of God in us make our faces to shine, and the light of our good works; that is, the comeliness God puts upon us, and those are comely indeed, who are so beautified. And then let divine consolations put gladness into our hearts, and a lustre upon our countenances, and that also will be the beauty of the Lord upon us, as our God. 2. That he would succeed them in it, *establish thou the work of our hands upon us*. God's working upon us, (ver. 16.) doth not discharge us from using our utmost endeavours in serving him, and working out our salvation. But when we have done all, we must wait upon God for the success, and beg of him to *prosper our handy works*, to give us to compass what we aim at for his glory. We are so unworthy of divine assistance, and yet so utterly insufficient to bring

any thing to pass without it, that we have need to be earnest for it, and to repeat the request: *Yea, the work of our hands establish thou it*, and in order to that, establish us in it.

P S A L M XCI.

Some of the ancients were of opinion, that Moses was the penman, not only of the foregoing Psalm, which is expressly said to be his, but also of the eight that next follow it; but that cannot be, for Psal. xcvi. is expressly said to be penned by David, and long after Moses, Heb. iv. 7. And it is probable, this Psalm also was penned by David; it is a writ of protection for all true believers, not in the name of king David, or under his broad-seal, he needed it himself, especially if the Psalm was penned as some conjecture it was, at the time of the pestilence, which was sent for his numbring the people, but in the name of the King of kings, and under the broad seal of heaven. Observe, (1.) The Psalmist's own resolution to take God for his keeper, ver. 2. from which he gives both direction and encouragement to others, ver. 9. (2.) The promises which are here made in God's name to all those that do so in sincerity. 1. They shall be taken under the peculiar care of heaven; ver. 1. 4. 2. They shall be delivered from the malice of the powers of darkness, ver. 3.—5, 6. and that by a distinguishing preservation, ver. 7, 8. 3. They shall be the charge of the holy angels, ver. 10.—11. 4. They shall triumph over their enemies, ver. 13. 5. They shall be the special favourites of God himself, ver. 14.—16. In singing this we must shelter ourselves under, and then solace ourselves in the divine protection. Many think, that to Christ, as mediator, these promises do primarily belong, (Isa. xlix. 2.) not, because to him the devil applied one of these promises, Mat. iv. 6. but because to him they are very applicable, and coming through him, they are more sweet and sure to all believers.

1. **H**E that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. 2. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge, and my fortress: my God, in him will I trust. 3. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler: and from the noisom pestilence. 4. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. 5. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night: nor for the arrow that flieth by day: 6. Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness: nor for the destruction that waiteth at noon-day. 7. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand: but it shall not come nigh thee. 8. Only with thine eyes, shalt thou behold, and see the reward of the wicked.

In these verses we have,

1. A great truth laid down in general, that all those, who live a life of communion with God, are constantly safe under his protection, and may therefore preserve a holy serenity, and security of mind at all times, ver. 1. *He that dwells, that sits down in the secret place of the most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty*, i. e. He that by faith chooseth God for his guardian, shall find all that in him which he needs or can desire. Note, 1. It is the character of a true believer, that he dwells in the secret place of the most High, i. e. He is at home in God, returns to God, and reposeth in him as his rest; he acquaints himself with inside religion, and makes heart-work of the service of God; worships within the veil, and loves to be alone with God, to converse with him in solitude. It is the privilege and comfort of those that do so, that they abide under the shadow of the Almighty, i. e. He shelters them, and comes between them, and every thing that would annoy them, whether storm or sun-shine. They shall not only have an admittance, but a residence under God's protection, he will be their rest and refuge for ever.

2. The Psalmist's comfortable application of this to himself, ver. 2. *I will say of the Lord*, whatever others say of him, *He is my refuge*; I chuse him so, and confide in him. Others made idols their refuge, but I will say of Jehovah, the true and living God, he is my refuge: Any other is a refuge of lies. And he is a refuge that will not fail me; for he is my fortress, and strong-hold; idolaters called their idols Mahuzzim, their most strong-hold, Dan. xi. 19. but therein they deceived themselves, those only secure themselves that make the Lord their God their fortress. And having no reason to question his sufficiency, fitly doth it follow, *in him will I trust*. If Jehovah be our God, our refuge and our fortress, what can we desire, which we may not be sure to find in him? He is neither fickle, nor false; nor weak, nor mortal; he is God and not man, and therefore there is no danger of being disappointed in him. *We know whom we have trusted*.

3. The great encouragement he gives to others to do likewise; not only from his own experience of the comfort of it, for in that it was possible there might be a fallacy; but from the truth of God's promise, in which there neither is, nor can be any deceit, ver. 3, 4, &c. *Surely he shall deliver thee*. Those, who have themselves

themselves found the comfort of making God their refuge, cannot but desire that others may do so to. Now here it is promised :

1. That believers shall be kept from those mischiefs which they are in imminent danger of, and which would be fatal to them, *ver.*

3. *From the snare of the fowler*, which is laid unseen, and catches the unwary prey on a sudden: And *from the noisom pestilence*, which seizeth men unawares; and against which there is no guard. This promise protects, (1.) The natural life, and is often fulfilled in our preservation from those dangers which are very threatening, and very near, and yet we ourselves are not apprehensive of them, no more than the bird is of the snare of the fowler. We owe it, more than we are sensible, to the care of the divine providence, that we have been kept from infectious diseases, and out of the hands of the wicked and unreasonable. (2.) The spiritual life, which is protected by divine grace from the temptations of Satan, which are as the snares of the fowler; and from the contagion of sin, which is the noisom pestilence. He that has given grace to be the glory of the soul, will create a defence upon all that glory.

2. That God himself will be their protector; they must needs be safe that have him for their keeper, and in a good bottom for whom he undertakes, *ver.* 4. *He shall cover thee*, shall keep thee secret, Psal. xxxi. 20. and so keep thee safe, Psal. xxvii. 5. God protects believers, 1. With the greatest tenderness and affection; which is intimated in that, he shall cover thee *with his feathers, under his wings*, which alludes to the hen gathering her chickens under her wings, Matt. xxiii. 37. By natural instinct she not only protects them, but calls them under that protection, when she sees them in danger; not only keeps them safe, but cherisheth them and keeps them warm. To this the great God is pleased to compare his care of his people, which are helpless as the chickens, and easily made a prey of, but are invited to trust under the wings of the divine promise and providence, which is the periphrasis of a prophete to the true religion, that he is come to *trust under the wings of the God of Israel*, Ruth ii. 12. 2. With the greatest power and efficacy; wings and feathers, though spread with the greatest tenderness, yet are weak and easily broken through, and therefore it is added, *His truth shall be thy shield and buckler*, a strong defence. God is as willing to guard his people, as the hen is to guard the chickens, and as able as a man of war in armour.

3. That he will not only keep them from evil, but from the fear of evil, *ver.* 5, 6. Here is, 1. Great danger supposed, the mention of it is enough to frighten us; night and day we lie exposed, and those that are disposed to be timorous, will not think themselves safe either night or day. When we are retired into our chambers, our beds, and made all as safe as we can about us, yet there is terror by night, from thieves and robbers, winds and storms, besides those things that are the creatures of fancy and imagination, which are often most frightful of all; we read of *fear in the night*, Cant. iii. 8. There is also a *pestilence that walketh in darkness*, as that was which slew the first born of the Egyptians, and the army of the Assyrians; no locks or bars can shut out diseases, while we carry about with us in our own bodies the seeds of them. But sure in the day time, when we can look about us, we are not so much in danger; yes, there is an *arrow that flieth by day too*, and yet flies unseen; there is a destruction that wasteth at high-noon, when we are awake, and have all our friends about us; even then we cannot secure ourselves, nor can they secure us. It was in the day-time that that pestilence wasted which was sent to chastise David for numbring the people, on occasion of which some think this Psalm was penned. But, 2. Here is great security promised to believers in the midst of this danger; *Thou shalt not be afraid*, i. e. God by his grace will keep thee from disquieting distrustful fear, that fear which hath torment, in the midst of the greatest dangers. Wisdom shall keep thee from being causelessly afraid, and faith shall keep thee from being inordinately afraid. Thou shalt not be afraid of the arrow, as knowing, that though it may hit thee, it cannot hurt thee; if it take away the natural life, yet it shall be so far from doing any prejudice to the spiritual life, that it shall be its perfection. A believer needs not fear, and therefore should not fear any arrow, because the point is off, the poison is out, *O death, where is thy sting?* And because it is under divine direction, and will hit where God appoints, and not otherwise. Every bullet has its commission. Whatever is done, our heavenly Father's will is done; and we have no reason to be afraid of that.

4. That they shall be preserved in common calamities in a distinguishing way, *ver.* 7. When death rides in triumph, and diseases rage, so that *thousands, and ten thousands* fall, fall by sickness, or fall by the sword in battle, *fall at thy side, at thy right hand*, and the sight of their fall is enough to frighten thee; and if they fall by the pestilence, their falling so near thee may be likely to infect thee; yet *it shall not come nigh thee*, the death shall not, the fear of death shall not. Those that preserve their purity in times of general corruption, may trust God with their safety in times of general desolation. When multitudes die round about us, though thereby we must be awakened to prepare for our own death, yet we must not be *afraid with any amazement*, nor make our selves subject to bondage, as many do all their life-time, *through fear of death*, Heb. ii. 15. The sprinkling of blood secured the first-born of Israel, when thousands fell. Nay, it is promised to God's people, that they shall have the satisfaction of seeing, not only God's pro-

mises fulfilled to them, but his threatnings fulfilled upon those that hate them, *ver.* 8. *Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the just reward of the wicked*, which perhaps refers to the destruction of the first-born of Egypt by the pestilence, which was both the punishment of the oppressors and the enlargement of the oppressed; this Israel saw when they saw themselves unhurt, untouched. As it will aggravate the damnation of sinners, that with their eyes they shall behold and see the reward of the righteous, *Luke* xiii. 28. so it will magnify the salvation of the saints, that with their eyes they shall behold and see the destruction of the wicked, *Isa.* lxvi. 24. *Psal.* lviii. 10.

9. Because thou hast made the LORD *which is my refuge, even the most High*, thy habitation: 10. There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. 11. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. 12. They shall bear thee up in *their* hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. 13. Thou shalt tread upon the lion, and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. 14. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore I will deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. 15. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I *will be* with him in trouble, I will deliver him, and honour him. 16. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

Here are more promises to the same purpose with those in the foregoing verses, and they are exceeding great and precious, and sure to all the seed.

1. The psalmist assures believers of divine protection from his own experience, and that which he faith is the word of God, and what we may rely upon.

Observe, (1.) The character of those that shall have the benefit and comfort of these promises, it is much the same with that, *ver.* 1. They are such as make *the most High their habitation*, *ver.* 9. that are continually with God, and rest in him; that make his name both their temple and their strong tower; that dwell in love, and so dwell in God. It is our duty to be at home in God, to make our choice of him, and then to live our life in him as our habitation; to converse with him, and delight in him, and depend upon him; and then it shall be our privilege to be at home in God, that is, we shall be welcome to him, as a man to his own habitation, without any let, hindrance, or molestation, from the arrests of the law, or the clamours of conscience; and then we shall be safe in him, shall be kept in *perfect peace*, *Isa.* xxvi. 3. To encourage us to make the Lord our habitation, and to hope for safety and satisfaction in him, the psalmist intimates the comfort he had had in doing so; he whom thou makest thy *habitation, is my refuge*; and I have found him firm and faithful, and in him there is room enough, and shelter enough, both for thee and me. *In my father's house there are many mansions*, one needs not crowd another, much less crowd out another.

2. The promises that are sure to all those who have thus made *the most High their habitation*.

(1.) That whatever happens to them, nothing shall hurt them, *ver.* 10. *There shall no evil befall thee*; though trouble and affliction befall thee; yet there shall be no real evil in it, for it shall come from the love of God; and shall be sanctified; it shall come, not for thy hurt, but for thy good; and though for *the present it be not joyous but grievous*, yet in the end it shall yield so well, that thou thy self shalt own *no evil befall thee*. It is not an evil, an only evil, but there is a mixture of good in it, and a product of good by it. Nay, not thy person only, but thy dwelling shall be taken under the divine protection, *there shall no plague come nigh that*; nothing to do thee or thine any damage. *Nihil accidere bono viro mali potest*, Senec. de provid.

(2.) That the angels of light shall be serviceable to them, *ver.* 11, 12. This is a precious promise, and speaks a great deal both of honour and comfort to the saints, and it is never the worse for its being quoted and abused by the devil in tempting Christ, *Matt.* iv. 6. Observe,

1. The charge given to the angels concerning the saints. He who is the Lord of the angels, who gave them their being, and gives laws to them; whose they are, and whom they were made to serve, *He shall give his angels a charge over thee*; not only over the church in general, but over every particular believer. The angels *keep the charge of the Lord their God*; and this is the charge they receive from him. It notes the great care God takes of the saints, in that the angels themselves shall be charged with them, and employed for them. The charge is, *to keep thee in all thy ways*; here is a limitation of the promise, they *shall keep thee in thy ways*, i. e. as long as thou keepest in the way of thy duty; they that go out of that way, put themselves out of God's protection: this word the devil left out when he quoted it to enforce a temptation, knowing how much it made against him. But observe the extent of the promise; it is *to keep thee in all thy ways*: even where there is

is no apparent danger, yet we need it, and where there is the most imminent danger we shall have it. Wherever the saints go, the angels are charged with them, as the servants are with the children.

2. The care which the angels take of the saints pursuant to this charge; *They shall bear thee up in their hands*, which notes both their great ability, and their great affection. They are able to bear up the saints out of the reach of danger, and they do it with all the tenderness and affection wherewith the nurse carries the little child about in her arms: it speaks us helpless, and them helpful. They are condescending in their ministrations, they keep the feet of the saints, lest they *dash them against a stone*, lest they stumble and fall into sin, and into trouble.

3. That the powers of darkness shall be triumphed over by them, *ver. 13. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder*; the devil is called a roaring lion, the old serpent, the red dragon; so that to this promise the apostle seems to refer in that, *Rom. xvi. 20. The God of peace shall tread Satan under your feet*. Christ has broke the serpent's head, spoiled our spiritual enemies, *Col. ii. 15.* and through him *we are more than conquerors*; for Christ calls us, as Joshua called the captains of Israel, to come and set their feet on the necks of these vanquished enemies. Some think, this promise had its full accomplishment in Christ, and the miraculous power which he had over the whole creation, healing the sick, casting out devils, and particularly putting it into his disciples commission, that they should *take up serpents*, *Mark xvi. 18.* It may be applied to that care of the divine providence, by which we are preserved from ravenous, noxious creatures; *The wild beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee*, *Job v. 23.* nay, and have ways and means of taming them, *Jam. iii. 7.*

2. He brings in God himself speaking words of comfort to the saints, and declaring the mercy he hath in store for them, *ver. 14, 15, 16.* Some make this to be spoken to the angels as the reason of the charge given them concerning the saints, *q. d.* Take care of them, for they are dear to me, and I have a tender concern for them.

And how, as before, we must observe,

1. To whom these promises do belong; they are described by three characters. (1.) They are such as know God's name. His nature we cannot fully know; but by his name he has made himself known, and with that we must acquaint our selves. (2.) They are such as have set their love upon him; and they who rightly know him will love him, will place their love upon him, as the only adequate object of it; will let out their love towards him with pleasure and enlargement, and will fix their love upon him, with a resolution never to remove it to any rival. (3.) They are such as call upon him; that by prayer keep up a constant correspondence with him, and in every difficult case refer themselves to him.

2. What the promises are which God makes to the saints.

(1.) That he will in due time deliver them out of trouble. *I will deliver him*, *ver. 14.* and again, *ver. 15.* noting a double deliverance; living and dying: a deliverance in trouble, and a deliverance out of trouble. If God proportions the degree and continuance of our troubles to our strength; if he keeps us from offending him in our troubles, and makes our death our discharge at length from all our troubles, then this promise is fulfilled. See *Psal. xxxiv. 19.* 2 *Tim. iii. 11.* *iv. 18.*

(2.) That he will in the mean time *be with them in trouble*, *ver. 15.* If he doth not presently put a period to their afflictions, yet they shall have his gracious presence with them in their troubles; he will take notice of their sorrows, and *know their souls in adversity*; will visit them graciously by his word and Spirit, and converse with them, will take their part, will support and comfort them, and sanctify their afflictions to them, which will be the surest token of his presence with them in their troubles.

(3.) That herein he will answer their prayers; *He shall call upon me*, *i. e.* I will pour upon him the spirit of prayer, and then I will answer, answer by promises, *Psal. lxxxv. 8.* answer by providences, bringing in seasonable relief; and answer by graces, *strengthening them with strength in their souls*, *Psal. cxxxviii. 3.* thus he answered Paul with *grace sufficient*, *2 Cor. xii. 9.*

(4.) That he will exalt and dignify them. *I will set him on high*, out of the reach of trouble, above the stormy region, on a rock *above the ways*, *Isa. xxxiii. 16.* They shall be enabled by the grace of God, to look down upon the things of this world with a holy contempt and indifferency, and to look up to the things of the other world with a holy ambition and concern, and then they are set on high. *I will honour him*; and those are truly honourable whom God puts honour upon, by taking them into covenant and communion with himself, and designing them for his kingdom and glory, *John xii. 26.*

(5.) That they shall have a sufficiency of life in this world, *ver. 16. With length of days will I satisfy him*; that is, 1. They shall live long enough; they shall be continued in this world till they have done the work they were sent into this world for, and are ready for heaven, and that is long enough. Who would wish to live a day longer than God has some work to do, either by him or upon him! 2. They shall think it long enough, for God by his grace shall wean them from the world, and make them willing to leave it. A man may die young, and yet die full of days, (*satur die-rum*) satisfied with living. A wicked worldly man is not satisfied, no not with long life; he still cries, Give, give: but he that has

his treasure and heart in another world, has soon enough of this, he would not live always.

(6.) That they shall have an eternal life in the other world. This crowns the blessedness, *I will shew him my salvation*; shew him *the Messiah*, so some; good old Simeon was then satisfied with long life, when he could say, *mine eyes have seen thy salvation*: nor was there any greater joy to the Old Testament saints, than to see Christ's day, though at a distance, or rather, the better country, that is, the heavenly, which the patriarchs desired and sought: he *will shew him that*, *i. e.* bring him to that blessed state, the felicity of which consists so much in seeing that face to face, which here we here see through a glass darkly; and in the mean time give him a prospect of it. All these promises, some think, point primarily at Christ, and had their accomplishment in his resurrection and exaltation.

P S A L M XCII.

It is a groundless opinion of some of the Jewish writers, who are usually free of their conjectures, that this psalm was penned and sung by Adam in innocency, on the first sabbath. It is inconsistent with the psalm it self, which speaks of the workers of iniquity, whereas yet sin had not entred. It is probable, it was penned by David, and being calculated for the sabbath-day, 1. Praise, the business of the sabbath, is here recommended, ver. 1,—3. 2. God's works, which gave occasion for the sabbath, are here celebrated, as great and unsearchable in general, ver. 4, 5, 6. In particular, with reference to the works both of providence and redemption, the psalmist sings unto God both of mercy and judgment, the ruin of sinners, and the joy of saints, three times counterchanged. The wicked shall perish, ver. 7. But God is eternal, ver. 8. 3. God's enemies shall be cut off, but David shall be exalted, ver. 9, 10. 4. David's enemies shall be confounded, ver. 11. but all the righteous shall be fruitful and flourishing, ver. 12,—15. In singing this psalm we must take pleasure in giving to God the glory due to his name, and triumph in his works.

¶ A psalm, or song, for the sabbath-day.

It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High: 2. To shew forth thy loving kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night; 3. Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound. 4. For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands. 5. O LORD, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep. 6. A brutish man knoweth not: neither doth a fool understand this.

This psalm was appointed, or at least accustomed, to be sung in the house of the sanctuary on the sabbath-day, that day of rest, which was an instituted memorial of the work of creation, of God's rest from that work, and the continuance of it in his providence; for *the Father worketh hitherto*. Note, 1. The sabbath-day must be a day, not only of holy rest, but of holy work; and the rest is in order to the work. 2. The proper work of the sabbath is praising God; every sabbath-day must be a thanksgiving-day; and the other services of the day must be in order to this, and therefore must by no means thrust this into a corner. One of the Jewish writers refers it to the kingdom of the Messiah, and calls it, A psalm or song for the age to come, which shall be all sabbath. Believers, through Christ, enjoy that *Sabbatism which remains for the people of God*, *Heb. iv. 9.* the beginning of the everlasting sabbath.

In these verses,

1. We are called upon and encouraged to praise God, *ver. 1, 2.* 3. *It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord.* Praising God is good work; it is good in it self, and good for us: it is our duty, the rent, the tribute we are to pay to our great Lord, we are unjust if we withhold it; it is our privilege, that we are admitted to praise God, and have hope to be accepted in it: it is good, for it is pleasant and profitable, work that is its own wages; it is the work of angels, the work of heaven. It is good to give thanks for the mercies we have received, for that is the way of fetching in further mercy: it is fit to sing to his name, who is most high exalted above all blessing and praise. Now observe here,

(1.) How we must praise God; we must do it by *shewing forth his loving kindness, and his faithfulness*. Being convinced of his glorious attributes and perfections, we must shew them forth, as those that are greatly affected with them our selves, and desire to affect others with them likewise. We must shew forth not only his greatness and majesty, his holiness and justice, which magnify him, and strike an awe upon us; but his loving kindness, and his faithfulness, for his goodness is his glory, *Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19.* and by these he proclaims his name. His mercy and truth are the great supports of our faith and hope, and the great encouragements of our love and obedience; these therefore we must shew forth as our pleas in prayer, and the matter of our joy. This was then

done, not only by singing, but by musick joined with it, upon an instrument of ten strings, ver. 3. but then it was to be with a solemn sound; not with that which was gay, and apt to dissipate the spirits, but that which was grave, and apt to fix them.

(2.) When we must praise God; in the morning, and every night. Not only on sabbath-days, but every day; it is that which the duty of every day requires; we must praise God, not only in publick assemblies, but in secret, and in our families; shewing forth to our selves, and those about us, his loving kindness and faithfulness. We must begin and end every day with praising God; must give him thanks every morning, when we are fresh, and before the business of the day comes in upon us; and every night, when we are again composed and retired, and are recollecting our selves: Give him thanks every morning for the mercies of the night, and every night for the mercies of the day; going out and coming in, we must bless God.

2. We have an example set before us in the psalmist himself, both to move us to, and to direct us in this work, ver. 4. *Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work.* Note, 1. Those can best recommend to others the duty of praise, that have themselves experienced the pleasantness of it. God's works are to be praised, for they have many a time rejoiced my heart, and therefore, whatever others think of them, I must think well, and speak well of them. 2. If God has given us the joy of his works, there is all the reason in the world we should give him the honour of them. Has he made our hearts glad? let us then make his praises glorious. Has God made us glad through the works of his providence for us, and of his grace in us, and both through the great work of redemption?

(1.) Let us then thence fetch encouragement for our faith and hope; so the psalmist doth, *I will triumph in the works of thy hands.* From a joyful remembrance of what God has done for us, we may raise a joyful prospect of what he will do, and triumph in the assurance of it, triumph over all opposition, 2 *Theff.* ii. 14.

(2.) Let us thence fetch matter for holy adorings and admirings of God, ver. 5. *O Lord, how great are thy works!* Great, beyond conception, beyond expression! The products of great power and wisdom, of great consequence and importance; mens works are nothing to them. We cannot comprehend the greatness of God's works, and therefore must reverently and awfully wonder at them, and even stand amazed at the magnificence of them. Mens works are little and trifling, for their thoughts are shallow; but, Lord, *thy works are great*, and such as cannot be measured; for *thy thoughts are very deep*, and such as cannot be fathomed. God's counsels as much exceed the contrivances of our wisdom, as his works do the efforts of our power. *His thoughts are above our thoughts*, as his ways are above our ways, *Isa.* lv. 9. *O the depth of God's designs!* *Rom.* xi. 33. The greatness of God's works should lead us to consider the depth of his thoughts, that counsel of his own will, according to which he doth all things. What a compass his thoughts fetch, and to what a length they reach!

3. We are admonished not to neglect the works of God, by the character of those that do, ver. 6. They are fools, they are brutish, who do not know, who do not understand how great God's works are, who will not acquaint themselves with them, or give him the glory of them; they regard not the work of the Lord, nor consider the operation of his hands, *Psal.* xxviii. 5. particularly, they understand not the meaning of their own prosperity, which is spoken of, ver. 7. they take it as a pledge of their happiness, whereas it is a preparative for their ruin. If there are so many who know not the designs of providence, nor care to know them, those that through grace are acquainted with them, and love to be so, have the more reason to be thankful.

7. When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish: it is that they shall be destroyed for ever. 8. But thou, LORD, art most High for evermore. 9. For, lo, thine enemies, O LORD, for lo, thine enemies shall perish: all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered. 10. But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil. 11. Mine eye also shall see my desire on mine enemies: and mine ears shall hear my desire of the wicked that rise up against me. 12. The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. 13. Those that be planted in the house of the LORD, shall flourish in the courts of our God. 14. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age: they shall be fat and flourishing: 15. To shew that the LORD is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

The psalmist had said, ver. 4. that from the works of God he would take occasion to triumph; and here he doth so.

1. He triumphs over God's enemies, ver. 7, 9, 11. triumphs in the foresight of their destruction; not as it would be the misery of his fellow-creatures, but as it would redound to the honour of God's justice and holiness.

He is confident of the ruin of sinners.

(1.) Though they are flourishing, ver. 7. *When the wicked spring as the grass* in spring, so numerous, so thick sown, so green, and growing so fast; and all the workers of iniquity do flourish, in pomp and power, and all the instances of outward prosperity, are easy and many, and succeed in their enterprises; one would think all this were in order to their being happy; that it was a certain evidence of God's favour, and an earnest of something as good or better in reserve; but it is quite otherwise: it is, that they shall be destroyed for ever. The very prosperity of fools shall slay them, *Prov.* i. 32. The sheep that are designed for the slaughter, are put into the fattest pasture.

(2.) Though they are daring, ver. 9. They are thine enemies, and impudently avow themselves to be so; they are contrary to God, and they fight against God; they are in rebellion against his crown and dignity, and therefore it is easy to foresee that they shall perish; for *whoever hardned his heart against God and prospered?* Note, All the impenitent workers of iniquity shall be deemed and taken as God's enemies, and as such they shall perish and be scattered. Christ reckons those his enemies that will not have him to reign over them, and they shall be brought forth and slain before him. The workers of iniquity are now associated, and closely linked together, in a combination against God and religion, but they shall be scattered, and disabled to help one another against the just judgment of God. In the world to come they shall be separated from the congregation of the righteous; so the Chaldee, *Psal.* i. 5.

(3.) Though they had a particular malice against the psalmist, and, upon that account, he might be tempted to fear them, yet he triumphs over them, ver. 11. *Mine eyes shall see my desire on mine enemies that rise up against me*, i. e. I shall see them not only disabled to do me any further mischief, but reckoned with for the mischief they have done me; and brought either to repentance or ruin: and this was his desire concerning them. In the Hebrew it is no more but thus, *Mine eye shall look on mine enemies, and mine ear shall hear of the wicked.* He doth not say what he shall see, or what he shall hear, but he shall see and hear that in which God will be glorified, and in which he will therefore be satisfied. This, perhaps, has reference to Christ, to his victory over Satan, death and hell, the destruction of those that persecuted and crucified him, and opposed his gospel; and to the final ruin of the impenitent at the last day. They that rise up against Christ will fall before him, and be made his footstool.

2. He triumphs in God, and his glory and grace.

(1.) In the glory of God, ver. 8. *But thou, O Lord, art most High for evermore.* The workers of iniquity that fight against us may be high for a time, and think to carry all before them with a high hand, but thou art High, most High for evermore; their height will be humbled and brought down, but thine is everlasting. Let us not therefore fear the pride and power of evil men, nor be discouraged by their impotent menaces, for the moth shall eat them up as a garment, but God's righteousness shall be for ever, *Isa.* lvi. 7, 8.

(2.) In the grace of God; his favour, and the fruits of it.

1. To himself, ver. 10. Thou, O Lord, that art thy self most High, shalt exalt my horn: the great God is the fountain of honour, and he being high for evermore, himself will exalt his people for ever, for he is the praise of all his saints, *Psal.* cxliii. 14. The wicked are forbidden to lift up the horn, *Psal.* lxxv. 4, 5. but those that serve God, and the interest of his kingdom, with their honour and power, and commit it to him to keep it, to raise it, to use it, and to dispose of it as he pleaseth; may hope that he will exalt their horn as the horn of a unicorn, to the greatest height, either in this world, or the other: *My horn shalt thou exalt*, when thine enemies perish; for then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, when the wicked shall be doomed to shame and everlasting contempt. He adds, *I shall be anointed with fresh oil*, which speaks a fresh confirmation in his office, to which he had been anointed, or abundance of plenty, so that he should have fresh oil as oft as he pleased, or renewed comforts to revive him when his spirits drooped: grace is the anointing of the Spirit, which, when it is given to help in the time of need, and is received, as there is occasion, from the fulness that is in Christ Jesus, we are then anointed with fresh oil. Some read it, *When I grow old, thou shalt anoint me with fresh oil: My old age shalt thou exalt with rich mercy*, so the Seventy: Compare ver. 14. *They shall bring forth fruit in old age.* The comforts of God's Spirit, and the joys of his salvation, shall be a refreshing oil to the hoary heads that are found in the way of righteousness.

2. To all the saints; they are here represented as trees of righteousness, *Isa.* lxi. 3. *Psal.* i. 3. Observe,

(1.) The good place they are fixed in; they are planted in the house of the Lord, ver. 13. The trees of righteousness do not grow of themselves, they are planted, not in common soil, but in paradise, in the house of the Lord. Trees do not use to be planted in a house; but God's trees are said to be planted in his house; because it is from his grace, by his word and Spirit, that they receive all the sap and virtue that keeps them alive, and makes them fruitful. They fix themselves to holy ordinances, take root in them, abide by them, put themselves under the divine protection, and bring forth all their fruits to God's honour and glory.

(2.) The

(2.) The good plight they shall be kept in; it is here promised, 1. That they shall grow, *ver. 12.* Where God gives true grace, he will give more grace; God's trees shall grow higher, like the cedars, the tall cedars in Lebanon, they shall grow nearer heaven, and with a holy ambition shall aspire towards the upper world: They shall grow stronger, like the cedars, and fitter for use. He that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.

2. That they shall flourish, both in the credit of their profession, and in the comfort and joy of their own souls: They shall be chearful themselves, and respected by all about them. *They shall flourish like the palm tree,* which has a stately body, *Cant. vii. 7.* large boughs, *Lev. xxiii. 40.* *Jude iv. 5.* Dates, the fruit of it, are very pleasant, but it is especially alluded to here, as being ever-green. The wicked flourish as the grass, *ver. 7.* which is soon withered, and the righteous as the palm-tree, which is long lived, and which the winter doth not change. It has been said of the palm tree, that the more it is pressed down the more it grows, *ful pondere crescit,* so the righteous flourish under their burthens, the more they are afflicted, the more they multiply. Being planted in the house of the Lord, there their root is, *they flourish in the courts of our God,* there their branches spread: *Their life is hid with Christ in God.* But their light also shines before men. It is desirable, that those that have a place should have a name in God's house, and within his walls, *Isa. lvi. 5.* let good christians aim to excel, that they may be eminent, and may flourish, and so may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, as flourishing trees adorn the courts of a house: And let those that flourish in God's courts give him the glory of it, it is by virtue of this promise; *they shall be fat and flourishing.* Their flourishing without is from a fatness within, from the root and fatness of the good olive, *Rom. xi. 17.* Without a living principle of grace in the heart, the profession will not be long flourishing, but where that is, *the leaf also shall not wither,* *Pfal. i. 3.* *The trees of the Lord are full of sap,* *Pfal. civ. 16.* See *Hof. xiv. 5, 6.*

3. That they shall be fruitful; were there nothing but leaves upon them, they would not be trees of any value; but *they shall still bring forth fruit,* the products of sanctification, all the instances of a lively devotion and an useful conversation, good works, by which God is glorified and others edified. These are the fruits of righteousness, in which it is the privilege as well as the duty of the righteous to abound; and it is the matter of a promise, as well as the matter of a command: It is promised they shall bring forth fruit in old age: Other trees, when they are old, leave off bearing, but in God's trees the strength of grace doth not fail with the strength of nature. The last days of the saints are sometimes their best days, and their last work their best work: This indeed shews that they are upright; perseverance is the surest evidence of sincerity. But it is here said, *to shew that the Lord is upright,* *ver. 15.* that he is true to his promises, and faithful to every word that he hath spoken, and that he is constant to the work which he has begun. As it is by the promises, that believers first partake of a divine nature, so it is by the promises, that that divine nature is preserved and kept up, and therefore the power it exerts is an evidence that the Lord is upright, and so he will shew himself *with an upright man,* *Pfal. xviii. 25.* This the psalmist triumphs in, *He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.* I have chosen him for my rock, on which to build, in the clefts of which to take shelter, on the top of which to set my feet: I have found him a rock, strong and steadfast, and his word as firm as a rock. I have found (and let every one speak as they find) that there is no unrighteousness in him. He is as able, and will be as kind as his word makes him to be. All that ever trusted in God found him faithful and all-sufficient, and none were ever made ashamed of their hope in him.

P S A L M XCIII.

This short psalm sets forth the honour of the kingdom of God among men, to his glory, the terror of his enemies, and the comfort of all his loving subjects. And it relates both to the kingdom of his providence, by which he upholds and governs the world, and especially to the kingdom of his grace, by which he secures the church, sanctifies and preserves it. The administration of both these kingdoms is put into the hands of the Messiah, and to him, doubtless, the prophet here bears witness, and to his kingdom, speaking of it as present, because sure; and because, as the eternal Word, even before his incarnation, he was Lord of all. Concerning God's kingdom glorious things are here spoken. (1.) Have other kings their royal robes? so has he, *ver. 1.* (2.) Have they their throne? so has he, *ver. 2.* (3.) Have they their enemies whom they subdue and triumph over? so has he, *ver. 3, 4.* (4.) Is it their honour to be faithful and holy? so is it his, *ver. 5.* In singing this psalm we forget ourselves, if we forget Christ, to whom the Father has given all power both in heaven and in earth.

1. THE LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty, the LORD is clothed with strength wherewith he hath girded himself: the world also is established, that it cannot be moved. 2. Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting. 3. The

floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice: the floods lift up their waves. 4. The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea. 5. Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever.

Next to the being of God, there is nothing that we are more concerned to believe and consider than God's dominion; that Jehovah is God, and that this God reigns, *ver. 1.* not only that he is King of right, and is the Owner and Proprietor of all persons and things, but that he is King in fact, and doth direct and dispose of all the creatures and all their actions, according to the counsel of his own will: This is celebrated here, and in many other psalms; *The Lord reigns:* It is the song of the gospel-church, of the glorified church, *Rev. xix. 6.* *Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigns.* And here we are told how he reigns.

1. The Lord reigns gloriously: *He is clothed with majesty.* The majesty of earthly princes, compared with God's terrible majesty, is but like the glimmerings of a glow-worm, compared with the brightness of the sun, when he goes forth in his strength. Are the enemies of God's kingdom great and formidable? yet let us not fear them, for God's majesty will eclipse theirs.

2. He reigns powerfully: He is not only clothed with majesty, as a prince in his court, but he is *clothed with strength,* as a general in the camp: He has wherewithal to support his greatness, and to make it truly formidable. See him not only clad in robes, but clad in armour; both *strength and honour are his clothing.* He can do every thing, and with him nothing is impossible. 1. With this power *he hath girded himself;* it is not derived from any other, nor doth the executing of it depend upon any other, but he has it of himself, and with it doth whatsoever he pleaseth. Let us not fear the power of man, which is borrowed and bounded, but fear him, who has power to kill and cast into hell. 2. To this power it is owing, that the world stands to this day: The world also is established, it was so at first, by the creating power of God, when he founded it upon the seas: It is so still by that providence which upholds all things, and is a continued creation; it is so established, that though he hath *hanged the earth upon nothing,* *Job xxvi. 7.* yet it cannot be moved; all things *continue to this day according to his ordinance.* Note, The preserving of the powers of nature, and the course of nature, is what the God of nature must have the glory of, and we that have the benefit thereof daily, are very careless and ungrateful, if we give him not the glory of it. Though God clothes himself with majesty, yet he condescends to take care of this lower world, and to settle the affairs of that: And if he established the world, much more will he establish his church, that it cannot be moved.

3. He reigns eternally, *ver. 2.* *Thy throne is established of old,* 1. God's right to rule the world, is founded in his making it; he that gave being to it, no doubt, may give law to it, and so his title to the government is uncontestable: *Thy throne is established,* it is a title without a flaw in it; and it is ancient, it is established of old, from the beginning of time, before any other rule, principality or power was erected, as it will continue, when all other rule, principality and power shall be put down, *1 Cor. xv. 24.* 2. The whole administration of his government was settled in his eternal counsels, before all worlds. For he doth all, according to the purpose which he purposed in himself. The chariots of providence came down from between the mountains of brass, from these decrees, which are fixed as the everlasting mountains, *Zech. vi. 1.* *Thou art from everlasting,* and therefore *thy throne is established of old;* because God himself was from everlasting, his throne, and all the determinations of it were so too: for in an eternal mind there could not but be eternal thoughts.

4. He reigns triumphantly, *ver. 3, 4.* We have here, 1. A threatening storm supposed, *The floods have lifted up, O Lord,* (to God himself the remonstrance is made) *the floods have lifted up their voice,* which speaks terror, nay, they have lifted up their waves, which speaks real danger. It alludes to a tempestuous sea, such as the wicked are compared to, *Isa. lvii. 20.* The heathen rage, *Pfal. ii. 1.* and think to ruin the church, to overwhelm it like a deluge, to sink it like a ship at sea. The church is said to be tossed with tempests, *Isa. liv. 11.* and the floods of ungodly men make the saints afraid, *Pfal. xviii. 4.* We may apply it to the tumults that are sometimes in our own bosoms, through prevailing passions and frights, which put the soul into disorder, and are ready to overthrow its graces and comforts; but, if the Lord reigns, there even the winds and seas shall obey him.

2. An immovable anchor cast in this storm, *ver. 4.* *The Lord himself is mightier.* Let this keep our minds fixed, (1.) That God is on high, above them, which notes his safety; they cannot reach him, *Pfal. xxix. 10.* and his sovereignty, they are ruled by him, they are over-ruled, and wherein they rebel overcome, *Exod. xviii. 11.* (2.) That he is mightier, doth more wondrous things than the noise of many waters; they cannot disturb his rest or rule; they cannot defeat his designs and purposes. Observe, the power of the church's enemies is but as the noise of many waters; there is more of sound than substance in it; *Pharaoh, king of Egypt is but a noise,* *Jer.*

Jer. xlv. 17. The church's friends are commonly worse frightened than hurt; God is mightier than this noise; he is mighty to preserve his people's interests from being ruined by these many waters, and his people's spirits from being terrified by the noise of them. He can, when he pleaseth, command peace to the church, *Psal. lxxv. 7.* Peace in the soul, *Isa. xxvi. 3.* Note, The unlimited sovereignty and irresistible power of the great Jehovah, is very encouraging to the people of God, in reference to all the noises and hurries they meet with in this world, *Psal. xlv. 1, 2.*

5. He reigns in truth and holiness, *ver. 5.* (1.) All his promises are inviolably faithful. *Thy testimonies are very sure.* As God is able to protect his church, so he is true to his promises he has made of its safety and victory. His word is past, and all the saints may rely upon it: Whatever was foretold, concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, would certainly have its accomplishment in due time: Those testimonies, upon which the faith and hope of the O. T. Saints was built, were very sure, and would not fail them. (2.) All his people ought to be conscientiously pure. *Holiness becomes thy house, O Lord, for ever.* God's church is his house; it is a holy house cleansed from sin, consecrated by God, and employed in his service: The holiness of it is its beauty; nothing better becomes the saints than conformity to God's image, and an intire devotedness to his honour; and it is its strength and safety: It is the holiness of God's house, that secures it against the many waters, and their noise; where there is purity, there shall be peace. Fashions change, and that that is becoming at one time is not at another, but holiness always becomes God's house and family, and those that belong to it; it is perpetually decent; and nothing so ill becomes the worshippers of the holy God as unholiness.

P S A L M XCIV.

This psalm was penned when the church of God was under hatches, oppressed and persecuted; and it is an appeal to God, as the judge of heaven and earth, and an address to him, to appear for his people against his and their enemies. Two things this psalm speaks,

(1.) *Conviction and terror to the persecutors, ver. 1.—11. shewing them their danger and folly, and arguing with them.* (2.) *Comfort and peace to the persecuted, ver. 12.—23. assuring them, both from God's promise, and from the psalmist's own experience, that their troubles would end well, and God would in due time appear to their joy, and the confusion of those that set themselves against them. In singing this psalm, we must look abroad upon the pride of oppressors, with a holy indignation, and the tears of the oppressed with a holy compassion; but at the same time look upwards to the righteous Judge, with an intire satisfaction, and look forwards, to the end of all these things, with a pleasing hope.*

1. **O** LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth: **O** God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thy self. 2. Lift up thy self, thou Judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud. 3. LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph? 4. How long shall they utter and speak hard things? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves? 5. They break in pieces thy people, O LORD, and afflict thine heritage. 6. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. 7. Yet they say, The LORD shall not see: neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. 8. Understand, ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise? 9. He that planted the ear, shall he not hear, he that formed the eye, shall he not see? 10. He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know? 11. The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.

In these verses we have,

1. A solemn appeal to God against the cruel oppressors of his people, *ver. 1, 2.* And this speaks terror enough to them, that they have the prayers of God's people against them, who cry day and night to him, to avenge them of their adversaries; and shall not he avenge them speedily? *Luke xviii. 3, 7.* Observe here,

(1.) The title they give to God, for the encouraging of their faith in this appeal, *O God, to whom vengeance belongeth: And thou Judge of the earth:* We may with boldness appeal to him; for, 1. He is Judge, supreme Judge, Judge alone, from whom every man's judgment proceeds. He that gives law, gives sentence upon every man, according to his works, by the rule of that law. He hath prepared his throne for judgment: He hath indeed appointed magistrates to be avengers under him, *Rom. xiii. 4.* But he is the avenger in chief, to whom even magistrates themselves are accountable; his throne is the last refuge (the dernier resort, as the law speaks) of oppressed innocency. He is universal Judge, not of this city or country only, but *Judge of the earth*, of the whole earth: None are exempt from his jurisdiction; nor can it be alledged a-

gainst an appeal to him in any court, that it is *coram non judice*. 2. He is just; as he has authority to revenge wrong, so it is his nature and property, and honour: And this also is implied in the title here given to him, and repeated with such an emphasis, *O God, to whom vengeance belongs*, who will not suffer might always to prevail against right. This is a good reason why we must not avenge our selves, because God hath said, *vengeance is mine*, and it is daring presumption to usurp his prerogative, and step into his throne, *Rom. xii. 19.* Let this frighten those who do wrong, whether with a close hand, so as not to be discovered, or with a high hand, so as not to be controlled, there is a God, to whom vengeance belongs, who will certainly call them to an account; and let it encourage those who suffer wrong, to bear it with silence, committing themselves to him that judgeth righteously.

(2.) What it is they ask of God; 1. That he would glorify himself, and get honour to his own name. Wicked persecutors thought God was withdrawn, and had forsaken the earth, Lord, say they, shew thy self; make them know that thou art, and that thou art ready to shew thy self strong, on the behalf of those whose hearts are upright with thee. The enemies thought God was conquered, because his people were; Lord, say they, Lift up thy self, be thou exalted in thy own strength: Lift up thy self to be seen, to be feared, and suffer not thy name to be trampled upon and run down. 2. That he would mortify the oppressors, render a reward to the proud, i. e. reckon with them all their insolence, and the injuries they have done to thy people. These prayers are prophecies, which speak terror to all the sons of violence: The righteous God will deal with them according to their merits.

2. An humble complaint to God of the pride and cruelty of the oppressors, and an expostulation with him concerning it, *ver. 3, 4, 5, 6.* Where observe,

(1.) The character of the enemies they complain against; they are wicked, they are workers of iniquity, they are bad, very bad themselves, and therefore they hate and persecute those whose goodness shames and condemns them. Those are wicked indeed, and workers of the worst iniquity, lost to all honour and virtue, that are cruel to the innocent, and hate the righteous.

(2.) Their haughty barbarous carriage which they complain of. 1. They are insolent, and take a pleasure in magnifying themselves. They talk high, and talk big, they triumph, they speak loud things, they boast themselves, as if their tongues were their own, and their hands too, and they were accountable to none for what they say or do; and as if the day were their own, and they doubted not but to carry the cause against God and religion. They that speak highly of themselves, that triumph and boast, are apt to speak hardly of others; but there will come a day of reckoning for all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against God, his truths, and ways, and people, *Jude xv. 15.* 2. They are impious and take a pleasure in running down God's people because they are his, *ver. 5.* They break in pieces thy people, O Lord; break their assemblies, their estates, their families, their persons in pieces, and do all they can to afflict thine heritage, to grieve them, to crush them, to run them down, to root them out. God's people are his heritage; there are those that, for his sake, hate them and seek their ruin: And this is a very good plea with God in our intercessions for the church, Lord it is thine, thou hast a property in it, it is thine heritage, thou hast a pleasure in it, and out of it the rent of thy glory in this world issues. And wilt thou suffer these wicked men to trample upon it thus? 3. They are inhuman, and take a pleasure in wronging those that are least able to help themselves, *ver. 6.* They not only oppress and impoverish, but they slay the widow and the stranger; not only neglect the fatherless and make a prey of them, but murder them; because they are weak and exposed, and sometimes lie at their mercy: Those whom they should protect from injury, they are most injurious to; perhaps, because God has taken them into his particular care. Who would think it possible that any of the children of men should be thus barbarous?

(3.) A modest pleading with God concerning the continuance of the persecution. Lord, how long shall they do thus? and again how long? when shall this wickedness of the wicked come to an end?

3. A charge of atheism exhibited against the persecutors, and an expostulation with them upon that charge.

1. Their atheistical thoughts are here discovered, *ver. 7.* yet they say, *The Lord shall not see:* Though the cry of their wickedness is very great and loud, though they rebel against the light of nature, and the dictates of their own consciences; yet they have the confidence to say, *The Lord shall not see;* he will not only wink at small faults, but shut his eyes at great ones too: Or they think they have managed it so artfully under colour of justice and religion, perhaps, that it will not be adjudged murder. The God of Jacob, though his people pretend to have such an interest in him, doth not regard it, either as against justice, or as against his own people; he will never call them to an account for it; thus denying God's government of the world; bantering his covenant with his people, and setting the judgment to come at defiance.

2. They are here convicted of folly and absurdity; he that saith, either that Jehovah the living God shall not see, or that the God of Jacob shall not regard the injuries done to his people, Nabal

is his name, and folly is with him; and yet here he is fairly reasoned with, for his conviction and conversation, to prevent his confusion, *ver. 8. understand ye brutish among the people*, and let reason guide you. Note, The atheistical, though they set up for wits, and philosophers and politicians, yet are really the *brutish among the people*; and if they would but understand, they would believe. God by the prophet speaks, as if he thought the time long till men would be men, and shew themselves so by understanding and considering; *Ye fools, when will ye be wise?* so wise as to know that God sees and regards all you say and do, and to speak and act accordingly; as those that must give account. Note, None are so bad, but means are to be used for the reclaiming and reforming of them; none so brutish, so foolish, but it should be tried whether they may not yet be made wise; while there is life, there is hope.

To evidence the folly of those that question God's omniscience and justice, the psalmist argues,

1. From the works of creation, *ver. 9. the formation of human bodies*, which, as it proves that there is a God, so it proves that God has infinitely and transcendently in himself all those perfections that are in any creature. *He that planted the ear*, (and it is planted in the head, as a tree in the ground,) *shall he not hear?* no doubt he shall more, and better than we can; *He that formed the eye*, (and how curiously it is formed above any part of the body, anatomists know, and let us know by their dissections) *shall he not see?* Could he give, would he give that perfection to a creature, which he has not in himself? Note, 1. The powers of nature are all derived from the God of nature. See *Exod. iv. 11.* 2. By the knowledge of our selves, we may be led a great way towards the knowledge of God; if by the knowledge of our own bodies, and the organs of sense, so as to conclude, that if we can see and hear, much more can God; then certainly by the knowledge of our own souls, and their noble faculties. The Gods of the heathen had eyes and saw not, ears and heard not; our God has no eyes or ears as we have, and yet we must conclude he both sees and hears; because we have our sight and hearing from him, and are accountable to him, how we use it.

2. He argues from the works of providence, *ver. 10.* He that chastiseth the heathen for their polytheism and idolatry, shall not he much more correct his own people for their atheism and profaneness? He that chastiseth the children of men for oppressing and wronging one another, shall not he correct those that profess to be his own children, and call themselves so, and yet persecute those that are really so? Shall not we be under his correction, under whose government the whole world is? Doth he regard, as King of nations, and shall he not much more regard as the God of Jacob? Dr. Hammond gives another very probable sense of this; *He that instructeth the nations*, i. e. gives them his law, *shall not he correct?* i. e. shall not he judge them according to that law, and call them to an account for their violations of it? In vain, was the law given, if there will not be judgment upon it. And it is true, that the same word signifies to chastise and to instruct, because chastisement is intended for instruction, and instruction should go along with chastisement.

3. He argues from the works of grace; *He that teacheth man knowledge, shall he not know?* He not only as the God of nature has given the light of reason, but as the God of grace has given the light of revelation, hath shewed man what is true wisdom and understanding; and he that doth this, shall he not know? *Job xxviii. 23, 28.* The flowing of the streams is a certain sign of the fullness of the fountain: If all knowledge is from God, no doubt all knowledge is in God. From this general doctrine of God's omniscience, he not only confutes the atheists, who said, *the Lord shall not see*, *ver. 7.* he will not take cognizance of what we do; but awakens us all to consider, that God will take cognizance even of what we think, *ver. 11. The Lord knows the thoughts of man that they are vanity.* 1. He knows those thoughts in particular, concerning God's conniving at the wickedness of the wicked, and knows them to be vain; and laughs at the folly of those, who by such fond conceits buoy themselves up in sin. 2. He knows all the thoughts of the children of men, and knows them to be for the most part vain; that the imaginations of the thoughts of mens hearts is evil, only evil, and that continually: Even in good thoughts, there is a sickleness and inconstancy, which may well be called vanity. It concerns us to keep a strict guard upon our thoughts, because God takes particular notice of them. Thoughts are words to God, and vain thoughts are provocations.

12. Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law: 13. That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked. 14. For the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance. 15. But judgment shall return unto righteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it. 16. Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers? or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity? 17. Unless the LORD had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence. 18. When I said, My foot slippeth: thy mercy, O LORD, held me up.

19. In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul. 20. Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law? 21. They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood. 22. But the LORD is my defence: and my God is the rock of my refuge. 23. And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; yea, the LORD our God shall cut them off.

The psalmist having denounced tribulation to them that trouble God's people; here assures them, that are troubled, of rest. See 2 *Theff. i. 6, 7.* He speaks comfort, to suffering saints from God's promises; and his own experience.

1. From God's promises, which are such as not only save them from being miserable, but secure a happiness to them, *ver. 12. Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest.* Here he looks above the instruments of trouble, and eyes the hand of God, which gives it another name, and puts quite another colour upon it. The enemies break in pieces God's people; *ver. 5.* they aim at no less; but the truth of the matter is, that God, by them chastens his people, as the father the son in whom he delighteth, and the persecutors are only the rod he makes use of. Howbeit *they mean not so, neither doth their heart think so*, *Isa. x. 5, 6, 7.* Now it is here promised,

(1.) That God's people shall get good by their sufferings; when he chastens them, he will teach them, and blessed is the man, who is thus taken under a divine discipline; for *none teacheth like God.* Note, 1. The afflictions of the saints are fatherly chastenings, designed for our instruction, reformation and improvement. 2. When the teachings of the word and Spirit go along with the rebukes of providence, they then both speak men blessed, and help to make them so; for then they are marks of adoption, and means of sanctification. When we are chastened, we must pray to be taught, and look into the law as the best expositor of providence. It is not the chastening itself that doth good, but the teaching that goes along with it, and is the exposition of it.

(2.) That they shall see through their sufferings, *ver. 13. That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity.* Note, 1. There is a rest remaining for the people of God after the days of their adversity, which, though they may be many and long, shall be numbered and finished in due time, and shall not last always. He that sends the trouble, will send the rest, that he may comfort them according to the time he hath afflicted them. 2. God therefore teaches his people by their troubles, that he may prepare them for deliverance, and so give them rest from their troubles; that being reformed, they might be relieved; and the affliction having done its work, it may be removed.

(3.) That they shall see the ruin of those that are the instruments of their sufferings; which is the matter of a promise, not as gratifying any passion of theirs, but as redounding to the glory of God: *Until the pit is digged*, or rather, while the pit is in digging for the wicked, God is ordering peace for them at the same time that he is ordaining his arrows against the persecutors.

(4.) That though they may be cast down, yet certainly they shall not be cast off, *ver. 14.* Let God's suffering people assure themselves of this, that whatever their friends do, God will not cast them off, nor throw them out of his covenant, or out of his care; neither will he forsake them, because they are his inheritance, which he will not quit his title to, nor suffer himself to be disowned of. St. Paul comforted himself with this, *Rom. xi. 1.*

(5.) That as bad as things are, they shall mend, and though they are now out of course, yet they shall return to their due and ancient channel, *ver. 15. Judgment shall return unto righteousness*, i. e. The seeming disorders of providence (for real ones there never were) shall be rectified. God's judgment, i. e. his government, looks sometimes as if it were at a distance from righteousness, while the wicked prosper, and the best men meet with the worst usage: But it shall return to righteousness again, either in this world, or at the furthest in the judgment of the great day, which will set all to rights. And then *all the upright in heart shall be after it*, i. e. they shall follow it with their praises, and with an intire satisfaction; they shall return to a prosperous and flourishing condition, and shine forth out of obscurity; they shall accommodate themselves to the dispensations of divine providence, and with suitable affections attend all its motions. *They shall walk after the Lord*, *Hos. xi. 10.* Dr. Hammond thinks this was most eminently fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem first, and afterward of heathen Rome, the crucifiers of Christ, and persecutors of christians, and the rest which the churches had thereby; *Then judgment returned even to righteousness*, i. e. to mercy and goodness, and favour to God's people, who then were as much countenanced as before they had been trampled on.

2. From his own experiences and observations,

(1.) He and his friends had been oppressed by cruel and imperious men, that had power in their hands, and abused it, by abusing all good people with it. They were themselves *evil-doers* and *workers of iniquity*, *ver. 16.* they abandoned themselves to all man-

ner of impiety and immorality, and then their throne was a *throne of iniquity*, ver. 20. Their dignity served to put a reputation upon sin, and their authority was employed to support it; and to bring about their wicked designs. It is pity that ever a throne, which should be a terror to evil doers, and a protection and praise to them that do well, should be the seat and shelter of iniquity. That is a throne of iniquity, which by the policy of its council, frameth mischief, and by its sovereignty enacts it, and turns it into a law. Iniquity is daring enough, even when human laws are against it, which often prove too weak to give an effectual check to it; but how insolent, how mischievous is it, when it is backed by a law? Iniquity is not the better but much the worse for being enacted by law, nor will it excuse those that practise it, to say they did but do as they were bidden. These workers of iniquity having framed mischief by a law, take care to see the law executed; for they gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, who dare not keep the statutes of Omri, nor the law of the house of Ahab; and they condemned the innocent blood for violating their decrees. See an instance in Daniel's enemies, they framed mischief by a law when they obtained an impious edict against prayer, Dan. vi. 7. which, when Daniel would not obey, they assembled together against him, ver. 11. and condemn his innocent blood to the lions: The best of benefactors to mankind have often been thus treated under colour of law and justice, as the worst of malefactors.

(2.) This oppression they were under bore very hard upon them, and oppressed their spirits too. Let not suffering saints despair, though, when they are persecuted, they find themselves perplexed and cast down; it was so with the psalmist here, *His soul had almost dwelt in silence*, ver. 17. i. e. he was at his wits end, and knew not what to say or do; he was in his own apprehension at his life's end, ready to drop into the grave; that land of silence. St. Paul, in a like case, received a sentence of death within himself, 2 Cor. i. 8, 9. He said, *my foot slippeth*, ver. 18. i. e. I am going irretrievably, there is no remedy, I must fall, I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul; or my hope fails me, I do not find such firm footing for my faith, as I have sometimes found. See Psal. lxxiii. 2. He had a multitude of perplexed entangled thoughts within him, concerning the case he was in, and the construction to be made of it; and concerning the course he should take, and what was likely to be the issue of it.

(3.) In this distress they sought for help and succour, and some relief. (1.) They looked about for it, and were disappointed, ver. 16. *Who will rise up for me against the evil doers?* Have I any friend that, in love to me, will appear for me? Hath justice any friend that, in a pious indignation at unrighteousness, will plead my injured cause? He looked, but there was none to save, there was none to uphold. Note, When on the side of the oppressors there is power, it is no marvel if the oppressed have no comforter, none that dare own them, or speak a good word for them, Eccl. iv. 1. When St. Paul was brought before Nero's throne of iniquity, no man stood by him, 2 Tim. iv. 16. (2.) They looked up for it, ver. 20. They humbly expostulate with God; Lord, shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee? Wilt thou countenance and support these tyrants in their wickedness? we know thou wilt not. A throne has fellowship with God, when it is a throne of justice, and answers the end of the erecting of it; for by him kings reign, and when they reign for him, their judgments are his, and he owns them as his ministers, and whoever resists them, or rise up against them, shall receive to themselves damnation; but when it becomes a *throne of iniquity*, it has no longer fellowship with God: Far be it from the just and holy God, that he should be the patron of unrighteousness, even in princes and those that sit in thrones; yea, though they be the *thrones of the house of David*.

(4.) They found succour and relief in God, and in him only; when other friends failed, in him they had a faithful and powerful friend; and it is recommended to all God's suffering saints to trust in him.

1. God helps at a dead lift, ver. 17. When I had almost dwelt in silence, then the Lord was my help, kept me alive, kept me in heart; and unless I had made him my help, by putting my trust in him, and expecting relief from him: I could never have kept possession of my own soul; but living by faith in him, has kept my head above water, has given me breath, and something to say.

2. God's goodness is the great support of sinking spirits, ver. 18. when I said, *my foot slippeth* into sin, into ruin, into despair, then thy mercy, O Lord, held me up, and kept me from falling; and defeated the design of those who consulted to cast me down from mine excellency, Psal. lxii. 4. We are beholden not only to God's power, but to his pity for spiritual supports; thy mercy, the gifts of thy mercy, and my hope in thy mercy held me up. God's right hand sustains his people, when they looked on their right hand, and on their left, and there is none to uphold. And we are then prepared for his gracious supports, when we are sensible of our own weakness, and inability to stand by our own strength, and come to God to acknowledge it, and to tell him how *our foot slippeth*.

3. Divine consolations are the effectual relief of troubled spirits, ver. 19. In the multitude of my thoughts within me, that are noisy, like a multitude, crowding and jostling one another like a multitude, and very unruly, and ungovernable: in the multitude of my sorrowful, solicitous, timorous thoughts, thy comforts delight my

soul; and they are never more delightful than when they come in so seasonably to silence my unquiet thoughts, and keep my mind easy. The world's comforts give but little delight to the soul when it is hurried with melancholy thoughts, they are songs to a heavy heart; but God's comforts will reach the soul, and not the fancy only, and will bring with them that peace and pleasure, which the smiles of the world cannot give, and which the frowns of the world cannot take away.

4. God is and will be as a righteous Judge, the patron and protector of right, and the punisher and avenger of wrong; this the psalmist had both the assurance of, and the experience of.

1. He will right the injured, ver. 22. when none else will, or can, or dare shelter me, *The Lord is my defence*, to preserve me from the evil of my troubles, from sinking under them, and being ruined by them: and he is *the rock of my refuge*, in the clefts of which I may take shelter, and on the top of which I may set my feet, to be out of the reach of danger. God is his people's refuge, to whom they may flee, in whom they are safe and may be secure; he is the rock of their refuge, so strong, so firm, impregnable, immoveable as a rock: natural fastnesses sometimes exceed artificial fortifications.

1. He will reckon with the injurious, ver. 23. *He shall render to them their own iniquity*, i. e. He shall deal with them according to their deserts; and that very mischief which they did and designed against God's people, shall be brought upon themselves: and it follows, he shall cut them off in their own wickedness. A man cannot be more miserable than his own wickedness will make him, if God visit it upon him: it will cut him in the remembrance of it; it will cut him off in the recompence of it. This the psalm concludes with the triumphant assurance of; *Yea the Lord our God*, who takes our part, and owns us for his, shall cut them off, from any fellowship with him, and so shall make them completely miserable, and their pomp and power shall stand them in no stead.

P S A L M XCV.

For the expounding of this psalm, we may borrow a great deal of light from the apostle's discourse, Heb. iii. and iv. where it appears, both to have been penned by David, and to have been calculated for the days of the Messiah; for it is there said expressly, Heb. iv. 7. that the day here spoken of, ver. 7. is to be understood of the Gospel day, in which God speaks to us by his son, in a voice which we are concerned to hear, and proposeth to us a rest, besides that of Canaan. In singing of psalms it is intended, 1. That we should make melody unto the Lord, and that we are here excited to do, and assisted in doing; being called upon to praise God, ver. 1, 2. as a great God, ver. 3, 4, 5. and as our gracious benefactor, ver. 6, 7. 2. That we should teach and admonish our selves, and one another: and we are here taught and warned to hear God's voice, ver. 7. and not to harden our hearts, as the Israelites in the wilderness did, ver. 8, 9. lest we fall under God's wrath, and fall short of his rest, as they did, ver. 10, 11. This psalm must be sung with an holy reverence of God's majesty, and a dread of his justice, with a desire to please him, and a fear to offend him.

1. Come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. 2. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. 3. For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. 4. In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. 5. The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land. 6. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker. 7. For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand:

The psalmist here, as often elsewhere, stirs up himself and others to praise God; for it is a duty which ought to be performed with the most lively affections, and which we have great need to be excited to, being very often backward to it, and cold in it. Observe,

1. How God is to be praised. (1.) With holy joy and delight in him. The praising song must be a joyful noise, ver. 1. and again, ver. 2. Spiritual joy is the heart and soul of thankful praise: it is the will of God (such is the condescension of his grace) that when we give glory to him, as a being infinitely perfect and blessed, we should, at the same time, rejoice in him, as our Father and King, and a God in covenant with us. (2.) With humble reverence, and a holy awe of him, ver. 6. let us worship, and bow down, and kneel before him, as becomes those who know what an infinite distance there is between us and God, how much we are in danger of his wrath, and in need of his mercy. Though bodily exercise alone profits little, yet, certainly, it is our duty to glorify God with our bodies, by the outward expressions of reverence, seriousness, and humility, in the duties of religious worship. (3.) We must praise God with our voice; we must speak forth, sing forth

forth his praises out of the abundance of a heart filled with love, and joy, and thankfulness; *Sing to the Lord, make a noise, a joyful noise to him with psalms*; as those that are our selves much affected with his greatness and goodness, are forward to own our selves so, are desirous to be more and more affected therewith, and would willingly be instrumental to kindle and enflame the same pious and devout affection in others also. (4.) We must praise God in comfort, in the solemn assemblies; *Come, let us sing*; let us join in singing to the Lord; not others without me, nor I alone; but others with me. *Let us come together before his presence*, in the courts of his house, where his people use to attend him, and to expect his manifestations of himself. Whenever we come into God's presence, we must come with thanksgiving, that we are admitted to such a favour: and, whenever we have thanks to give, we must *come before God's presence*, set our selves before him, and present our selves to him in the ordinances which he hath appointed.

2. Why God is to be praised, and what must be the matter of our praise: we do not want matter, it were well if we did not want a heart: we must praise God,

(1.) Because he is a great God, and sovereign Lord of all, ver. 3. He is great, and therefore greatly to be praised. He is infinite and immense, and hath all perfection in himself. 1. He has great power; *he is a great King above all gods*, above all deputed deities, all magistrates, to whom he said, *Ye are gods*; he manageth them all, and serves his own purposes by them, and to him they are all accountable; above all counterfeit deities, all pretenders, all usurpers; he can do that which none of them can do; he can and will famish and vanquish them all. 2. He has great possessions. This lower world is here particularly instanced in; we reckon those great men that have large territories, which they call their own against all the world, which yet are a very inconsiderable part of the universe: how great then is that God, whose *the whole earth is, and the fulness thereof*; not only under whose feet it is, as he has an uncontested dominion over all the creatures, and a propriety in them, but in whose hand it is, as he has the actual directing and disposing of all, ver. 4. even *the deep places of the earth*, which are out of our sight, subterraneous springs and mines, *are in his hand*; and *the height of the hills*, which are out of our reach, whatever grows or feeds upon them, *is his also*. This may be taken figuratively, the meanest of the children of men, that are as the low places of the earth, are not beneath his cognizance; and the greatest, that are as the strength of the hills, are not above his control. Whatever strength is in any creature, it is derived from God, and employed for him, ver. 5. *The sea is his*, and all that is in it, the waves fulfil his word: it is his, for *he made it*, gathered its waters, and fixed its shores; *the dry land*, though given to the children of men, is his too, for he still reserved the property to himself: it is his, for *his hands formed it*, when his word made *the dry land* appear. His being the Creator of all, makes him without dispute the owner of all. This being a gospel psalm, we may very well suppose, that it is the Lord Jesus, whom we are here taught to praise: he is a great God, the mighty God is one of his titles, and *God over all, blessed for evermore*: as Mediator, he is a great King above all gods; by him kings reign; and angels, principalities and powers are subject to him; by him, as the eternal Word, *all things were made*, John i. 3. and it was fit he should be the restorer and reconciler of all, who was the Creator of all, Col. i. 16, 20. To him all power is given, both in heaven and in earth, and into his hand all things are delivered. It is he that sets one foot on the sea, and the other on the earth, as sovereign Lord of both, Rev. x. ii. and therefore to him we must sing our songs of praise; and before him we must worship and bow down.

(2.) Because he is our God; not only has a dominion over us, as he has over all the creatures, but stands in special relation to us, ver. 7. *He is our God*, and therefore it is expected we should praise him; who will, if we do not? What else did he make us for, but that we should be to him for a name and a praise?

1. He is our Creator, and the author of our being; we must kneel before the Lord our maker, ver. 6. Idolaters kneel before gods, which they themselves made; we kneel before a God that made us and all the world; and who is therefore our rightful proprietor; for his we are, and not our own.

2. He is our Saviour, and the author of our blessedness. He is here called *the rock of our salvation*, ver. 1. not only the founder, but the very foundation of that work of wonder, on whom it is built: *that rock is Christ*, to him therefore we must sing our songs of praises, *to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb*.

3. We are therefore his, under all possible obligations; *we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand*: all the children of men are so; they are fed and led by his providence, which cares for them, and conducts them, as the shepherd the sheep. We must therefore praise him, not only because he made us, but because he preserves and maintains us, and our breath and ways are in his hand. All the church's children are in a special manner so; Israel is *the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand*, and therefore he demands their homage in a special manner. The Gospel church is his flock, Christ is the great and good shepherd of it; we, as christians, are led by his hand into the green pastures, by him we are protected and well provided for: to his honour and service we are intirely devoted, as a peculiar people, and therefore to him must be

glory in the churches, whether it be in the world or no, *throughout all ages*, Eph. iii. 21.

7. — to day if ye will hear his voice, 8. Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: 9. When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. 10. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, *It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways*. 11. Unto whom I swear in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest.

The latter part of this psalm, which begins in the middle of a verse, is an exhortation to those that sing gospel psalms, to live gospel lives, and to hear the voice of God's word, or otherwise how can they expect that he should hear the voice of their prayers and praises?

Observe,

1. The duty required of all those that are the people of Christ's pasture, and the sheep of his hand. He expects that they hear his voice, for he hath said, *my sheep hear my voice*, John x. 27. *We are his people*, say they. Are you so? then hear his voice: If you call him Master or Lord, then do the things which he saith, and be his willing, obedient people. Hear the voice of his doctrine, his law, and in both, of his Spirit: hear and heed; hear and yield. Hear his voice, and not the voice of a stranger. If ye will hear his voice; some take it as a wish, *O that ye would hear his voice!* that ye would be so wise, and do so well for your selves; as, *if thou hadst known*, Luke xix. 41. i. e. O that thou hadst known! Christ's voice must be heard to day; this the apostle lays much stress upon, applying it to the Gospel day. While he is speaking to you, see that you attend to him, for this day of your opportunities will not last always, improve it therefore while it is called to day, Heb. iii. 13, 15. Hearing the voice of Christ is the same with believing; to day, if by faith you accept the Gospel offer, well and good, but to morrow it may be too late. In a matter of such vast importance, nothing more dangerous than delay.

2. The sin they are warned against, as inconsistent with the believing obedient ear required, and that is hardness of heart. If ye will hear his voice, and profit by what you hear, then do not harden your hearts; for the seed sown on the rock never brought any fruit to perfection. The Jews therefore believed not the gospel of Christ, because their hearts were hardened; they were not convinced of the evil of sin, and of their danger by reason of sin, and therefore they regarded not the offer of salvation; they would not bend to the yoke of Christ, nor yield to his demands; and if the sinner's heart be hardened, it is his own act and deed, he hardning it himself, and he alone shall bear the blame for ever.

3. The example they are warned by; which is that of the Israelites in the wilderness; take heed of sinning as they did, lest you be shut out of the everlasting rest, as they were out of Canaan. Be not as your fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, Psalm lxxviii. 8. Thus here, *Harden not your heart, as you did, i. e. your ancestors, in the provocation, or in Meribah, the place where they quarrelled with God and Moses, Exod. xvii. 2.—7. and in the day of temptation in the wilderness*, ver. 8. So often did they provoke God by their distrusts and murmurings, that the whole time of their continuance in the wilderness might be called a day of temptation, or Massa, the other name given to that place, Exod. xvii. 7. because they tempted the Lord, saying, *Is the Lord among us, or is he not?* This was in the wilderness, where they could not help themselves, but lay at God's mercy: and where God wonderfully helped them, and gave them such sensible proofs of his power, and tokens of his favour, as never any people had before or since. Note, 1. Days of temptation are days of provocation: nothing is more offensive to God than disbelief of his promise, and despair of the performance of it; because of some difficulties that seem to lie in the way. 2. The more experience we have had of the power and goodness of God, the greater is our sin if we distrust him. What, to tempt him in the wilderness, where we live upon him! This is as ungrateful, as it is absurd and unreasonable. 3. Hardness of heart is at the bottom of all our distrusts of God, and quarrels with him. That is a hard heart which receives not the impressions of divine discoveries, and conforms not to the intentions of the divine will, which will not melt, which will not bend. 4. The sins of others ought to be warnings to us not to tread in their steps. The murmurings of Israel were written for our admonition, 1 Cor. x. 11.

Now here observe,

1. The charge drawn up in God's name against the unbelieving Israelites, ver. 9, 10. God here, many ages after, complains of their ill carriage towards him, with the expressions of an high resentment. (1.) Their sin was unbelief: they tempted God, and proved him, i. e. they questioned whether they might take his word, and insisted upon further security, before they would go forward to Canaan, by sending spies; and when those discouraged them, they protested against the sufficiency of the divine power and promise, and would make a captain, and return into Egypt, Num. xiv. 3, 4. This is called rebellion, Deut. i. 26, 32. (2.) The ag-

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gravation of this sin was, that they saw God's work; they saw what he had done for them, in bringing them out of Egypt; nay, what he was now doing for them every day, this day, in the bread he rained from heaven for them, and the water out of the rock that followed them, than which they could not have more unquestionable evidences of God's presence with them; with them, even seeing was not believing, because they *hardened their hearts*, though they had seen what Pharaoh got by hardning his heart. (3.) The causes of their sin; see what God imputed it to, *It is a people that do err in their hearts, and they have not known my ways*. Mens unbelief and distrust of God, their murmurings and quarrels with him, are the effect of their ignorance and mistake. 1. Of their ignorance, *they have not known my ways*. They saw his work, ver. 9. and he made known his acts to them, Psalm ciii. 7. and yet they did not know his ways, the ways of his providence, in which he walked towards them, or, the ways of his commandments, in which he would have them to walk towards him: they did not know, i. e. they did not rightly understand; and therefore, did not approve of these. Note, The reason why people slight and forsake the ways of God, is, because they do not know them. 2. Of their mistake; *they do err in their heart*; they wander out of the way, in heart they turn back. Note, Sins are errors, practical errors, errors in heart; such there are, and as fatal as errors in the head. When the corrupt affections pervert the judgment, and so lead the soul out of the ways of duty and obedience, there is an error of the heart. (3.) God's resentment of their sin; *Forty years long was I grieved with this generation*. Note, The sins of God's professing people do not only anger him, but grieve him, especially their distrust of him: and God keeps an account, how often (Numb. xiv. 22.) and how long they grieve him; see the patience of God towards provoking sinners: he was grieved with them forty years, and yet those years ended in a triumphant entrance into Canaan, made by the next generation. If our sins have grieved God, surely they should grieve us, and nothing in sin should grieve us so much as that.

2. The sentence past upon them for their sin, ver. 11. *Unto whom I swear in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest*, then say I am changeable and untrue; see the sentence at large, Numb. xiv. 21, &c. Observe, 1. Whence this sentence came; from the wrath of God; he *swore solemnly in his wrath*, his just and holy wrath; but let not men therefore swear profanely in their wrath, their sinful brutish wrath. God is not subject to such passions as we are; but he is said to be angry, very angry at sin and sinners, to shew the malignity of sin, and the justice of God's government. That is certainly an evil thing which deserves such a recompence of revenge, as may be expected from a provoked deity. 2. What it was, *that they should not enter into his rest*, the rest which he had prepared and designed for them; a settlement for them and theirs: that none of them who were enrolled when they came out of Egypt, should be found written in the roll of the living at their entering into Canaan, but Caleb and Joshua. 3. How it was ratified; I swore it. It was not only a purpose, but a decree; the oath shewed the immutability of his counsel; *the Lord swore, and will not repent*: and it cut off the thought of any reserve of mercy; God's threatenings are as sure as his promises.

Now this case of Israel may be applied to those of their posterity that lived in David's time, when this psalm was penned: let them hear God's voice, and not harden their hearts, as their fathers did, lest, if they were stiff-necked like them, God should be provoked to forbid them the privileges of his temple at Jerusalem, of which he had said, *This is my rest*: but it must be applied to us Christians, because so the apostle applies it: there is a spiritual and eternal rest set before us and promised to us, of which Canaan was a type; we are all (in profession at least) bound for this rest, yet many that seem to be so come short, and shall never enter into it. And what is it that puts a bar in their door? It is sin, it is unbelief, that sin against the remedy, against our appeal. They that like Israel, distrust God, and his power and goodness, and prefer the garlick and onions of Egypt, before the milk and honey of Canaan, will justly be shut out from his rest; so shall their doom be, themselves have decided it. *Let us therefore fear*, Heb. iv. 1.

P S A L M XCVI.

This psalm is part of that psalm which was delivered into the hand of Asaph and his brethren, 1 Chron. xvi. 7. by which it appears, both that David was the penman of it, and that it has reference to the bringing up of the ark to the city of David; whether that long psalm was made first, and this afterwards taken out of it, or this made first and afterwards borrowed to make up that, is not certain. But this is certain, that though it was sung at the translation of the ark, it looks further to the kingdom of Christ, and is designed to celebrate the glories of that kingdom, especially the accession of the Gentiles to it. Here is (1.) A call given to all people to praise God, to worship him, and give glory to him, as a great and glorious God, ver. 1,—9. (2.) Notice given to all people of God's universal government and judgment, which ought to be the matter of universal joy, ver. 10,—13. In singing this psalm we ought to have our hearts filled with great and high thoughts of the glory of God, and the grace of the Gospel, and with an entire satisfaction in

Christ's sovereign dominion, and in the expectation of the judgment to come.

1. Sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD all the earth. 2. Sing unto the LORD, bless his name: shew forth his salvation from day to day. 3. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people. 4. For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods. 5. For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens. 6. Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. 7. Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength. 8. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering and come into his courts. 9. O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him all the earth.

These verses will be best expounded by pious and devout affections working in our souls towards God, with a high veneration for his Majesty and transcendent excellency. The call here given us to praise God is very lively, the expressions raised and repeated, to all which the echo of a thankful heart should make agreeable returns. We are here required to honour God,

1. With songs, ver. 1, 2. Three times we are here called to sing unto the Lord; sing to the Father, to the Son, to the holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, when the morning stars sung together, is now, in the church militant, and ever shall be in the church triumphant. We have reason to do it often, and we have need to be often minded of it, and stirred up to it. Sing unto the Lord, that is, bless his name, speak well of him, that you may bring others to think well of him. (1.) Sing a new song, i. e. an excellent song, the product of new affections, clothed with new expressions. We speak of nothing more despicable than an old song, but the newness of a song recommends it; for there we expect something surprizing. A new song is a song for new favours, for those compassions which are new every morning. A new song is a new Testament song, a song of praise for the new covenant, and the precious privileges of that covenant. A new song is a song that shall be ever new, and shall never wax old, or vanish away; it is an everlasting song, that shall never be antiquated or out of date. (2.) Let all the earth sing this song, not the Jews only, to whom hitherto the service of God had been appropriated, who could not sing the Lord's song in (would not sing it to) a strange land: but let all the earth, all that are redeemed from the earth, learn and sing this new song, Rev. xiv. 3. This is a prophecy of the calling of the Gentiles; all the earth shall have this new song put into their mouths, shall have both cause and call to sing it. (3.) Let the subject matter of this song be his salvation; the great salvation which was to be wrought out by the Lord Jesus; that must be shewed forth as the cause of this joy and praise. (4.) Let these songs be sung constantly, and not only in the times appointed for the solemn feasts, but from day to day; it is a subject that can never be exhausted. Let day unto day utter this speech, that under the influence of Gospel devotions, we may daily exemplify a Gospel conversation.

2. With sermons, ver. 3. Declare his glory among the heathen, even his wonders among all people. 1. Salvation by Christ is here spoken of as a work of wonder, and that in which the glory of God shines very bright; in shewing forth that salvation we declare God's glory as it shines in the face of Christ. 2. This salvation was in the old Testament times, as heaven's happiness is now, a glory to be revealed; but in the fulness of time it was declared, and a full discovery made of that even to babes, which prophets and kings desired and wished to see, and might not. 3. What was then discovered was declared only among the Jews, but it is now declared among the heathen, among all people; the nations which long sat in darkness, now see this great light. The apostles commission to preach the gospel to every creature, is copied from this here; *Declare his glory among the heathen*.

3. With religious services, ver. 7, 8, 9. Hitherto, though in every nation they that feared God, and wrought righteousness, were accepted of him, yet instituted ordinances were the peculiarities of the Jewish religion: but in Gospel times the kindreds of the people shall be invited and admitted into the service of God, and be as welcome as ever the Jews were. The court of the Gentiles shall no longer be an outward court, but shall be laid in common with the court of Israel. All the earth is here summoned to fear before the Lord, i. e. to worship him according to his appointment. In every place incense shall be offered to his name, Mal. i. 11. Zech. xiv. 17. Isa. lxvi. 23. This indeed spoke mortification to the Jews, but withal it gave a prospect of that which would redound very much to the glory of God, and to the happiness of mankind.

Now observe how the acts of devotion to God are here described. 1. We must give unto the Lord; not as if God needed any thing, or could receive any thing from us or any creature, which was not his own before; much less be benefited by it: but we must

in our best affections, adorations and services, return to him what we have received from him, and do it freely, as what we give; for *God loves a cheerful giver*. It is debt, it is rent, it is tribute, it is what must be paid, and if not, will be recovered; and yet, if it come from holy love, God is pleased to accept it as a gift. 2. We must acknowledge God to be the sovereign Lord, and pay homage to him accordingly, *ver. 7. Give unto the Lord glory and strength, glory and empire, or dominion, so some*. As a king he is clothed with robes of glory, and girt with the girdle of power, and we must subscribe to both; *Thine is the kingdom, and therefore thine is the power and the glory*: Give the glory to God, do not take it to your selves, nor give it to any creature. 3. We must give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name, i. e. to the discovery he has been pleased to make of himself to the children of men. In all the acts of religious worship, this is that which we must aim at, to honour God, to pay him some of that reverence which we owe him as the best of beings, and the fountain of our being. 4. We must bring an offering into his courts. We must bring our selves in the first place: the offering up of the Gentiles, Rom. xv. 16. We must offer up the sacrifices of praise continually, Heb. xiii. 15. must often appear before God in publick worship, and never appear before him empty. 5. We must worship him in the beauty of holiness, in the solemn assembly, where divine institutions are religiously observed, the beauty of which is their holiness, that is, their conformity to the rule: worship him with holy hearts, sanctified by the grace of God, devoted to the glory of God, and purified from the pollutions of sin. 6. We must fear before him: all the acts of worship must be performed from a principle of the fear of God, and with a holy awe and reverence.

In the midst of these calls to praise God, and give glory to him, glorious things are here said of him, both as motives to praise, and matter of praise.

The Lord is great, and therefore greatly to be praised, ver. 4. and *to be feared*; great and honourable to his attendants, great and terrible to his adversaries. Even the new song proclaims God great as well as good; for his goodness is his glory: and when the everlasting gospel is preached, this is it, *Fear God, and give glory to him*, Rev. xiv. 6, 7.

1. He is great in his sovereignty over all that pretend to be deities; none dare vie with him, *He is to be feared above all gods*; all princes, who were often deified after their deaths, and even while they lived were adored as petty gods; or rather, all idols; *the gods of the nations*, ver. 5. All the earth being called to sing the new song, they must be convinced that the Lord Jehovah, to whose honour they must sing it, is the one only living and true God, infinitely above all rivals and pretenders: he is great, and they are little; he is all, and they are nothing: So the word used for idols signifies; for we know that *an idol is nothing in the world*, 1 Cor. viii. 4.

2. He is great in his right, even to the noblest part of the creation; for it is his own work, and derives its being from him. *The Lord made the heavens*, and all their hosts, *they are the work of his fingers*, Psal. viii. 3. so nicely, so curiously are they made. The gods of the nations were all made gods, the creatures of mens fancies; but our God is the Creator of the sun, moon and stars, those lights of heaven which they imagined to be gods, and worshipped as such.

3. He is great in the manifestation of his glory both in the upper and lower world; among his angels in heaven, and his saints on earth, *ver. 6. Splendor and majesty are before him*, in his immediate presence above, where the angels cover their faces, as unable to bear the dazzling lustre of his glory. *Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary*, both that above, and this below. In God there is every thing that is awful, and yet every thing that is amiable. If we attend him in his sanctuary, we shall behold his beauty, for God is love; and experience his strength, for *he is our rock*. Let us therefore go forth in his strength, enamoured with his beauty.

10. Say among the heathen, *that the LORD reigneth*: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved; he shall judge the people righteously. 11. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad: let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. 12. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice. 13. Before the LORD; for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.

We have here instructions given to those who were to preach the gospel to the nations, what to preach; or to those who had themselves received the gospel, what account to give of it to their neighbours, what to say among the heathen; and it is an illustrious prophecy of the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, upon the ruins of the devil's kingdom, which began presently after his ascension; and will continue in the doing till the mystery of God be finished.

1. Let it be told, *that the Lord reigneth*, the Lord Christ reigneth, that King whom God determined to set upon his holy hill of Zion. See how this was first said among the heathen by Peter,

Acts x. 42. Some of the ancients added a gloss to this, which by degrees crept into the text, *The Lord reigneth from the tree*; so Justin Martyr, Austin, and others, quote it; meaning the cross, when he had this title written over him, *The king of the Jews*; it was because he became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, that God exalted him, and gave him a name above every name, a throne above every throne. Some of the heathen came betimes to enquire after him that was *born King of the Jews*, Matt. ii. 2. Now let them know that he is come, and his kingdom is set up.

2. Let it be told, that Christ's government will be the world's happy settlement; *The world also shall be established that it shall not be moved*. The natural world shall be established; the standing of the world, and its stability; is owing to the mediation of Christ. Sin had given it a shock, and still threatens it, but Christ, as Redeemer, upholds all things, and preserves the course of nature. The world of mankind shall be established, shall be preserved, till all that belong to the election of grace are called in, though a guilty, provoking world. The Christian religion, as far as it is embraced, shall establish states and kingdoms, and preserve good order among men. The church in the world shall be established, (so some) that it cannot be moved, for it is built upon a rock; and the gates of hell shall never prevail against it; it is a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

3. Let them be told, that Christ's government will be uncontestably just and righteous; *He shall judge the people righteously*, ver. 10. *judge the world with righteousness, and with his truth*, ver. 13. Judging is here put for ruling; and though this may be extended to the general judgment of the world at the last day, which will be in righteousness, Acts xvii. 31. yet it refers more immediately to Christ's first coming, and the setting up of his kingdom in the world by the gospel. He saith himself, *For judgment am I come into this world*, John ix. 39. xii. 31. and that *all judgment was committed to him*, John v. 22, 27. His ruling and judging with righteousness and truth, signifies, 1. That all the laws and ordinances of his kingdom, shall be consonant to the rules and principles of eternal truth and equity, that is, to the rectitude and purity of the divine nature and will. 2. That all his administrations of government shall be just and faithful, and according to what he hath said. 3. That he shall rule in the hearts and consciences of men by the commanding power of truth; and the spirit of righteousness and sanctification. When Pilate asked our Saviour, *Art thou a king?* He answered, *For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth*, John xviii. 37. for he kings it by truth, commands mens wills by informing their judgments aright.

4. Let them be told, that his coming draws nigh; that this King, this Judge, *standeth before the door*; for he cometh, for he cometh. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, said so, *Behold, the Lord cometh*, Jude 14. Betwixt this and his first coming the revolutions of many ages intervened, and yet he came at the set time; and so sure will his second coming be; though it is now long since it was said, *Behold he comes in the clouds*, Rev. i. 7. and yet he is not come. See 2 Pet. iii. 4, &c.

5. Let them be called upon to rejoice in this honour that is put upon the Messiah, and this great trust that is to be lodged in his hand, *ver. 11, 12. Let heaven and earth rejoice, the sea, the field, and all the trees of the wood*. The dialect here is poetical; the meaning is, 1. That the days of the Messiah will be joyful days, and, as far as his grace and government are submitted to, they will bring joy along with them: we have reason to give that place, that soul joy, into which Christ is admitted. See an instance of both, Acts viii. when Samaria received the gospel, *there was great joy in that city*, ver. 8. and when the eunuch was baptized, *he went up on his way rejoicing*, ver. 39. 2. That it is the duty of every one of us to bid Christ and his kingdom welcome; for though it comes conquering, and to conquer, yet it comes peaceably. *Hosanna, Blessed is he that cometh*; and again, *Hosanna, Blessed be the kingdom of our father David*, Mark xi. 9, 10. not only let the daughter of Sion rejoice that her King comes, Zech. ix. 9. but let all rejoice. 3. That the whole creation will have reason to rejoice in the setting up of Christ's kingdom, even the sea, and the field; for as by the sin of the first Adam the whole creation was made subject to vanity, so by the grace of the second Adam, it shall some way or other, first or last, be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God, Rom. viii. 20, 21. 4. That there will in the first place be joy in heaven, joy in the presence of the angels of God; for when the first-begotten was brought into the world, they sung their anthems to his praise, Luke ii. 14. 5. That God will graciously accept the holy joys and praises of all the hearty well-wishers to the kingdom of Christ, be their capacity never so mean. *The sea can but roar, and how the trees of the wood can shew that they rejoice*, I know not; but he that searcheth the heart knows what is the mind of the Spirit, and understands the language, the broken language of the weakest.

P S A L M XCVII.

This psalm dwells upon the same subject, and is set to the same tune with the foregoing psalm. Christ is the Alpha and the Omega of both;

both; they are both penned, and are both to be sung to his honour; and we make nothing of them, if we do not in them make melody with our hearts to the Lord Jesus. He it is that reigns to the joy of all mankind, ver. 1. and his government speaks, 1. Terror to his enemies; for he is a prince of inflexible justice, and irresistible power, ver. 2,—7. 2. Comfort to his friends and loyal subjects, arising from his sovereign dominion; the care he takes of his people, and the provision he makes for them, ver. 8,—12. In singing this psalm we must be affected with the glory of the exalted Redeemer, must dread the lot of his enemies, and think our selves happy, if we are of those that kiss the Son.

1. **THE LORD** reigneth, let the people rejoice: let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. 2. Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgement are the habitation of his throne. 3. A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about. 4. His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw and trembled. 5. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD: at the presence of the LORD of the whole earth. 6. The heavens declare his righteousness: and all the people see his glory. 7. Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him all ye gods.

What was to be said among the heathen in the foregoing psalm, ver. 10. is here said again, ver. 1. and is made the subject of this psalm, and of psalm xcix. *The Lord reigns*; that is the great truth here laid down. The Lord Jehovah reigns; he that made the world governs it; he that gave being, gives motion and power; gives law and commission, gives success and event; every man's judgment proceeds from the Lord, from his counsel, and providence, and in all affairs both publick and private, he performeth the thing which he himself has appointed. The Lord Jesus reigns; the providential kingdom is twitted in with the mediatorial, and the administration of both is in the hand of Christ; who therefore is both the head of the church, and head over all things to the church.

The kingdom of Christ is so constituted, as that,

1. It may be matter of joy to all; and it will be so if it be not their own fault. *Let the earth rejoice*, for hereby it is established, Psal. xcvi. 10. it is honoured and enriched, and, in part, rescued from the vanity which by sin it is made subject to. Not only let the people of Israel rejoice in him, as King of the Jews, and the daughter of Zion as her King, but let all the earth rejoice in his elevation; for the kingdoms of the world shall more or less, sooner or later, become his kingdom: *let the multitude of isles*, the many or great isles, *be glad thereof*. This speaks the language of our country, which is a great isle, and has many belonging to it; however, it speaks comfort in general to the Gentiles, whose countries are called *the isles of the Gentiles*, Gen. x. 5. There is enough in Christ for the multitude of the isles to rejoice in; for though many have been made happy in him, yet still there is room.

All have reason to rejoice in Christ's government.

(1.) In the equity of it: There is an uncontestable instance in all the acts of his government, both legislative and judicial; sometimes indeed *clouds and darkness are round about him*, his dispensations are altogether unaccountable; *his way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters*; we are not aware what he designs, what he drives at; nor is it fit that we should be let into the secrets of his government; there is a depth in his counsels which we must not pretend to fathom; but still *righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne*; a golden thread of justice runs through the whole web of his administration. In this he resides, for it is his habitation. In this he rules, for it is *the habitation of his throne*. His commandments are, and will be, *all righteous*. *Righteousness and judgment are the basis of his throne*; (so Dr. Hammond) for therefore his throne is for ever and ever, because his sceptre is a right sceptre, Psalm xlv. 6. *The throne is established in righteousness*. Even *the heavens declare his righteousness*, ver. 6. i. e. it is as conspicuous and as illustrious as the heavens themselves. The angels of heaven will declare it, who are employed as messengers in the administration of his government, and therefore know more of it than any of his creatures. His righteousness is uncontestable, for who can contradict or dispute what the heavens declare? Psal. l. 6.

(2.) In the extent of it in the upper and lower world.

1. All the men on earth are under his government: either he is served by them, or he served himself by them. *All the people see his glory*, or may see it. The glory of God in the face of Christ was made to shine in distant countries, among many people, more or less among all people; the gospel was preached, for ought we know, in all languages, Acts ii. 5, 11. Miracles were wrought in all nations, and so *all the people saw his glory*. *Have they not heard?* Rom. x. 18.

2. All the angels in heaven are so; perhaps, we should not have found this truth in those words, ver. 7. *Worship him all ye gods*, if we had not been directed to it by the inspired apostle, who, from the Septuagint version of those words, makes the Messiah to be introduced into the upper world, at the ascension, with this charge,

Heb. i. 6. *Let all the angels of God worship him*; which helps us with a key to this whole psalm; and shews us that it must be applied to the exalted Redeemer, who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; which intimates that all power is given him both in heaven and earth; *angels, authorities and powers, being made subject unto him*, 1 Pet. iii. 22. This speaks the honour of Christ; that he hath such worshippers; and the honour of all good christians, that they have such fellow-worshippers.

2. Christ's government, though it may be matter of joy to all, yet will be matter of terror to some, and it is long of themselves that it is so, ver. 3, 4, 5, 7: Observe;

(1.) When the kingdom of Christ was to be set up in the world after his ascension, it would meet with many enemies, and much opposition would be given to it. He that reigns to the joy of the whole earth, yet as he has his subjects, so he hath his enemies, ver. 3. that not only will not have him to reign over them, but would not have him to reign at all; that not only will not enter into the kingdom of heaven themselves, but do all they can to hinder those that are entering, Matt. xxiii. 13. This was fulfilled in the enmity of the unbelieving Jews to the gospel of Christ; and the violent persecution which in all places they stirred up against the preachers and professors of it. These enemies are here called *hills*, ver. 5. for their height and strength, and immoveable obstinacy. They were the *princes of this world that crucified the Lord of glory*, 1 Cor. ii. 8. Psalm ii. 1.

(2.) The opposition which the Jews gave to the setting up of Christ's kingdom, turned to their own ruin. Their persecuting the apostles, and forbidding them to speak to the Gentiles; filled up their sin, and brought wrath upon them to the uttermost; 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16. That wrath is here compared, 1. To consuming fire, which goes before him, and burns up his enemies, that have made themselves like chaff and stubble, and have set the briers and thorns before him in battle, Isa. xxvii. 4. This fire of divine wrath will not only burn the rubbish upon the hills, but will even melt the hills themselves like wax, ver. 5. When our God appears as a consuming fire, even rocks will be wax before him. The most resolute and daring opposition will be baffled at the presence of the Lord. His very presence is enough to shame and sink it, for he is the Lord of the whole earth, by whom all the children of men are manageable, and to whom they are accountable. Men hate and persecute God's people, because they think him absent, that the Lord has forsaken the earth; but when he manifests his presence they melt. 2. To amazing lightnings, ver. 4. which strike a terror upon many. The judgments of God brought upon the enemies of Christ's kingdom, were such as all the world took notice of with terror; *The earth saw and trembled*, and the ears of all that heard were made to tingle. This was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem, and the Jewish nation, by the Romans, about forty years after Christ's resurrection, which, like fire, wholly destroyed that people, and like lightning astonished all their neighbours, Deut. xxix. 24. but the heavens declared God's righteousness in it, and all the people, to this day, see his glory, in those lasting monuments of his justice, the scattered Jews.

(3.) Idolaters also would be put to confusion by the setting up of Christ's kingdom, ver. 7. *Confounded be all they that serve graven images*, i. e. the Gentile world, who did service to them that by nature are no gods, Gal. iv. 8. who boast themselves of idols as their protectors and benefactors. Did they that served idols boast of them, and shall the servants of the living God distrust him, or be ashamed of him? *Let them be ashamed that serve graven images*. 1. This is a prayer for the conversion of the Gentiles, that those who have been so long serving dumb idols may be convinced of their error, ashamed of their folly, and may, by the power of Christ's gospel, be brought to serve the only living and true God; and may be as much ashamed of their idols, as ever they were proud of them. See Isa. ii. 20, 21. 2. This is a prophecy of the ruin of those that would not be reformed, and reclaimed from their idolatry; they shall be confounded by the destruction of Paganism in the Roman empire, which was fulfilled about three hundred years after Christ, so much to the terror of idolaters, that some think it was the revolution under Constantine, that made even the mighty men say to the rocks, *Fall on us, and hide us*, Rev. vi. 15, 16. This prayer and prophecy is still in force against Antichristian idolaters, who may here read their doom; *Confounded be all they that worship graven images*. See Jer. xlviii. 13.

8. Zion heard, and was glad, and the daughters of Judah rejoiced; because of thy judgments, O LORD. 9. For thou, LORD, art high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods. 10. Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints, he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked. 11. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. 12. Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous: and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

The kingdom of the Messiah, like the pillar of cloud and fire, as it hath a dark side towards the Egyptians, so it has a bright side

side towards the Israel of God. It is set up in spite of opposition; and then *the earth saw and trembled*, ver. 4. but *Sion heard and was glad*, very glad to hear of the conversion of some, and of the confusion of others, that is, the conquest of all that stood it out against Christ. *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion; for behold thy king comes unto thee*, Zec. ix. 9. And not Sion only, where the temple was, but even *the daughters of Judah rejoiced*, the common people, the inhabitants of the villages, they shall triumph in Christ's victories. The command, ver. 1. is, *Let the earth rejoice*: But it is only the sons of Sion, and the daughters of Judah that do rejoice. All should bid the kingdom of the Messiah welcome, but few do. Now here observe,

1. The reasons that are given for Sion's joy in the government of the Redeemer. The faithful servants of God may well rejoice and be glad;

(1.) Because God is glorified, and whatever redounds to his honour is very much his peoples pleasure. They rejoice *because of thy judgments, O Lord*; which may take in both the judgments of his mouth, and the judgments of his hand, the word of his gospel, and his works wrought for the propagating of it, miracles and marvellous providences; for in these we must own, *thou, Lord, art high above all the earth*, ver. 9. thou hast manifested thy sovereignty in the kingdom of nature, and thy command of all its powers, and thy dominion over all nations, over all hearts; thou art *exalted far above all gods*, all deputed gods, that is, princes; all counterfeit gods, that is, idols. The exaltation of Christ, and the advancement of God's glory among men thereby, is the rejoicing of all the faints.

(2.) Because care is taken for their safety; those that pay allegiance to Christ as a King, shall be sure of his protection; princes are the shields of the earth, Christ is so to his subjects, they may put their trust under his shadow, and rejoice in it; for, ver. 10. *He preserveth the souls of the saints*; he preserves their lives as long as he has any work for them to do, and wonderfully *delivers them many a time out of the hand of the wicked*, their persecutors that thirst after their blood; for *precious in the sight of the Lord, is the death of his saints*. But something more is meant than their lives, for they that will be his disciples, must be willing to lay down their lives, and not indent for the securing of them: It is the *immortal soul* that Christ preserves, the *inward man*, which may be renewed more and more when the *outward man decays*. He will *preserve the souls of his saints* from sin, from apostasy, and despair under their greatest trials; he will *deliver them out of the hands of the wicked one*, that seeks to devour them; he will *preserve them safe to his heavenly kingdom*, 2 Tim. iv. 18. They have therefore reason to be glad, being thus safe.

(3.) Because provision is made for their comfort; those that rejoice in Christ Jesus, and in his exaltation, have fountains of joy treasured up for them, which will be opened sooner or later, ver. 11. *Light is sown for the righteous*, that is, *gladness for the upright in heart*. The subjects of Christ's kingdom are bid to expect tribulation in the world; they must suffer by its malice, and must not share in its mirth; yet let them know to their comfort, that *light is sown* for them, it is designed and prepared for them; what is sown, will come up again in due time; though like a winter seedness, it may lie long under the clods, and seem to be lost and buried, yet it will return in a rich and plentiful increase. God's goodness shall be sure of a *harvest* in the *appointed weeks*. They that *sow in tears*, shall without fail, *reap in joy*, Psal. cxxvi. 5, 6. Christ told his disciples at parting, *Joh. xvi. 20. You shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy*. Gladness is sure to the *upright in heart*, to those only that are sincere in religion: *The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment*. There is no serenity, without a lasting sincerity.

2. The rules that are given for Sion's joy.

1. Let it be a pure and holy joy; *ye that love the Lord Jesus*, that love his appearing and kingdom; that love his word and his exaltation, see that ye hate evil, the evil of sin, every thing that is offensive to him, and will throw you out of his favour. Note, A true love to God will shew itself in a real hatred of all sin, as that abominable thing which he hates. The joy of the saints should likewise confirm their antipathy to sin, and divine comforts should put their mouths out of taste to sensual pleasures.

2. Let the joy terminate in God, ver. 12. *Rejoice in the Lord ye righteous*; let all the streams of comfort which flow to us in the channel of Christ's kingdom, lead us to the fountain, and oblige us to *rejoice in the Lord*. All the lines of joy must meet in him as in the centre. See *Phil. iii. 1. iv. 4.*


3. Let it express itself in praise and thanksgiving; *Give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness*. Whatever is the matter of our rejoicing, ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving; and particularly, the holiness of God. They that hate sin themselves, are glad that God doth so, in hopes, that therefore he will not suffer it to have dominion over them. Note, 1. We ought to be much in the remembrance of God's holiness, the infinite purity, rectitude and perfection of the divine nature. We must be ever mindful of his holy covenant, which he hath confirmed with an oath by his holiness. 2. He ought to give thanks upon the remembrance of his holiness; not only give him the glory of it as it is an honour to him, but give him thanks for it as it is a favour to us, and an

unspeakable favour it will be, if, through grace we are partakers of his holiness. It is God's holiness, which above all his attributes the angels celebrate, *Isa. vi. 3. Holy, holy, holy*. Sinners tremble, but faints rejoice at the remembrance of God's holiness, Psal. xxx. 5.

P S A L M XCVIII.

This psalm is to the same purpose with the two foregoing psalms; it is a prophecy of the kingdom of the Messiah, the setting it up in the world, and the bringing in of the Gentiles to it. The Chaldee intitles it a prophetick psalm. It sets forth, (1.) The glory of the Redeemer, ver. 1, 2, 3. (2.) The joy of the redeemed, ver. 4.—9. If we in a right manner give to Christ this glory, and upon right grounds take to ourselves this joy in singing this psalm, we sing it with understanding. And if they then, who saw Christ's day at a distance, and in the promise only, must rejoice and triumph thus, much more reason have we to do so, that see these things accomplished, and share in the better things provided for us, Heb. xi. 40.

¶ A Psalm.

1.  Sing unto the LORD a new song, for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory. 2. The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen. 3. He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

We are here called upon again to *sing unto the Lord a new song*, as before, Psal. xcvi. 1. Sing a most excellent song, the best song you have. Let the song of Christ's love be like Solomon's on that subject, a *song of songs*. A song of praise for redeeming love, is a new song, such a song as had not been sung before; for this is a mystery which was hid from ages and generations. Converts sing a new song, very different from what they had sung; they change their wonder, and change their joy, and therefore change their note. If the grace of God put a new heart into our breasts, it will therewith put a new song into our mouths. In the new Jerusalem there will be new songs sung, that will be new to eternity, and never wax old.

Let this new song be sung to the praise of God, in consideration of these four things.

1. The wonders he hath wrought; *he hath done marvellous things*, ver. 1. Note, The work of our salvation by Christ, is a work of wonder. If we take a view of all the steps of it from the contrivance of it, and the counsels of God concerning it before all time, to the consummation of it, and its everlasting consequences when time shall be no more, we shall say, God has in it *done marvellous things*; it is all his doing, and it is *marvellous in our eyes*. The more it is known, the more it will be admired.

2. The conquests he has won; *His right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory*. Our Redeemer hath surmounted all the difficulties that lay in the way of our redemption, has broken through them all, and was not discouraged by the services or sufferings appointed him. He hath subdued all the enemies that opposed it, hath gotten the victory over Satan, disarmed him, and cast him out of his strong holds, hath *spoiled principalities and powers*, Col. iii. 15. has *taken the prey from the mighty*, Isa. xlv. 24. and given death his death's wound; he hath gotten a clear and compleat victory, not only for himself, but for us also, for we, through him, are more than conquerors. He got this victory by his own power, there was *none to help, none to uphold, none that durst venture into the service*; but his *right hand and his holy arm*, which is therefore always stretched out with good success, because it is never stretched out but in a good cause; this has *gotten him the victory*, hath *brought him relief or deliverance* (so Dr. Hammond) God's power and faithfulness, called here his right hand and his holy arm, brought relief to the Lord Jesus, in raising him from the dead, and exalting him personally to the right hand of God; so he applies it.

3. The discoveries he has made to the world of the work of redemption. What he has wrought for us he hath revealed to us, and both by his son; the gospel revelation is that on which the gospel kingdom is founded; *The word which God sent*, Acts x. 36. The *opening of the sealed book*, is that which is to be celebrated with songs of praise, Rev. v. 8. because by it was brought to light the mystery which had long been hid in God. Observe, (1.) The subject of this discovery. His salvation and his righteousness, ver. 3. Righteousness and salvation are often put together; as *Isa. lxi. 10.—xlv. 13.—li. 5, 6, 8*. Salvation speaks the redemption itself, and righteousness the way in which it was wrought, by the righteousness of Christ: Or, the salvation includes all our gospel privileges, and the righteousness all our gospel duties; both are made known, for God hath joined them together, and we must not separate them. Or, righteousness is here put for the way of our justification by Christ, which is revealed in the gospel to be by faith, Rem.

Rom. i. 17. (2.) The plainness of this discovery, he hath openly shewed it, not in types and figures as under the law, but it is written as with a sun-beam, that he that runs may read it. Ministers are appointed to preach it with all plainness of speech. (3.) The extent of this discovery; it is made in the sight of the heathen, and not of the Jews only; *All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God*, for to the Gentiles was the word of salvation sent.

4. The accomplishment of the prophecies, and the promises of the Old Testament in this, *ver. 3. He hath remembered his mercy and his truth towards the house of Israel.* God had mercy in store for the seed of Abraham, and had given them many and great assurances of kindness he designed them in the latter days, and it was in pursuance of all those that he raised up his Son Jesus, to be not only a *light to lighten the Gentiles*, but *the glory of his people Israel*, for he sent him in the first place to bless them. God is said in sending Christ to *perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember the holy covenant*, Luke i. 72. It was in consideration of that, and not of their merit.

4. Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. 5. Sing unto the LORD with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm. 6. With trumpets and sound of cornet, make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King. 7. Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof: the world, and they that dwell therein. 8. Let the floods clap *their* hands: let the hills be joyful together. 9. Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.

The setting up of the kingdom of Christ is here represented as a matter of joy and praise.

1. Let all the children of men rejoice in it, for they all have, or may have benefit by it. Again and again we are here called upon by all ways and means possible to express our joy in it, and give God praise for it. *Make a joyful noise*, as before, Psal. xlv. 1, 2. *Make a loud noise*, as those that are affected with those glad tidings, and are desirous to affect others with them; *Rejoice and sing praise*, sing *Hosanna*, Matt. xxi. 9. sing *Hallelujahs*, Rev. xix. 6. Let him be welcomed to the throne as new kings use to be, with acclamations of joy and loud shouts, till the earth ring again, as when Solomon was proclaimed, 1 Kings i. 40. And let the shouts of the crowd be accompanied with the *singers and players on instruments*, Psal. lxxxvii. 7.—lxxxviii. 25. as is usual in such solemnities. 1. Let sacred songs attend the new king, *sing praise, sing with the voice of a psalm*. Express your joy, thus proclaim it, thus excite it yet more, and thus propagate it among others. 2. Let these be assisted with sacred musick, not only with the soft and gentle melody of the harp, but, since it is a victorious king, whose glory is to be celebrated, who goes forth conquering and to conquer, let him be proclaimed with the martial sound of the trumpet and cornet, *ver. 6.* Let all this joy be directed to God, and expressed in a solemn religious manner, *make a joyful noise to the Lord*, *ver. 4.* *Sing to the Lord*, *ver. 5.* do it *before the Lord, the King*, *ver. 6.* Carnal mirth is an enemy to this holy joy: When David danced before the ark, he pleaded, *it was before the Lord*; and the piety and devotion of the intention not only vindicated what he did, but commended it. We must rejoice *before the Lord*, whenever we draw near to him, *Deut. xii. 12.* before *the Lord Jesus*, and before him, not only as the Saviour, but as the King, the King of kings, the church's King, and our King.

2. Let the inferior creatures rejoice in it, *ver. 7, 8, 9.* This is to the same purpose with what we had before, Psal. xcvi. 11, 12, 13. *Let the sea roar*, and let that be called, not as it used to be, a *dreadful noise*, but a *joyful noise*; for the coming of Christ, and the salvation wrought out by him, hath quite altered the property of the troubles and terrors of this world, so that when the floods *lift up their voice, lift up their waves*, we must not construe that to be the sea *roaring against us*, but rather *rejoicing with us*. Let the floods express their joy as men do when they *clap their hands*; and let the hills, that trembled for fear before God, when he came down to give the law at mount Sinai, dance for joy before him when his gospel is preached, and that word of the Lord goes forth from Sion in a still, small voice. *Let the hills be joyful together before the Lord.* This intimates, that the kingdom of Christ would be a blessing to the whole creation, but that, as the inferior creatures declare the glory of the Creator, (Psal. xix. 1.) so they declare the glory of the Redeemer, for by him all things, not only subsist in their being, but consist in their order. It intimates likewise, that the children of men would be wanting in paying their due respects to the Redeemer, and therefore he must look for his honour from *the sea and the floods*, which would shame the stupidity and ingratitude of mankind. And, perhaps, respect is here had to the *new heavens and the new earth*, which, we yet, according to his promise, look for, 2 Pet. iii. 13. and this second mention of his coming after the like, Psal. xcvi. may principally refer to his second coming, when all these things shall be so dissolved as

to be refined, then shall he come to *judge the world with righteousness*; and in the prospect of that day all that are sanctified do rejoice, and even the sea, and the floods, and the hills would rejoice if they could. One would think that Virgil had these psalms in his eye, as well as the oracles of the Cumean Sybil, in his fourth eclogue, where he either ignorantly or basely applies to Asinius Pollio, the ancient prophecies, which at that time were expected to be fulfilled, for he lived in the reign of Augustus Cæsar, a little before our Saviour's birth: He owns they looked for the birth of a child from heaven, that should be a great blessing to the world, and restore the golden age;

Jam nova progenies cælo demittitur alto.

that should take away sin;

Te duce, si qua manent sceleris vestigia nostri,

Irrita perpetua solvent formidine terras.

Many other things he saith of this long looked for child, which Ludovicus Vives, in his notes on that eclogue, thinks applicable to Christ; and he concludes, as the psalmist here, with a prospect of the rejoicing of the whole creation herein;

Aspice, venturo lætentur ut omnia sæclo.

And if all rejoice, why should not we?

P S A L M. XCIX.

Still we are celebrating the glories of the kingdom of God among men, and are called upon to praise him, as in the foregoing psalms; but these psalms looked forward to the times of the gospel, and prophesied of the graces and comforts of those times; this psalm seems to dwell more upon the Old Testament dispensation, and the manifestation of God's glory and grace in that. Let not men in expectation of the Messiah's kingdom, and the evangelical worship neglect that divine regimen they were then under, and the ordinances that were then given them, but in them see God reigning, and worship before him according to the law of Moses. Prophecies of good things to come, must not lessen our esteem of good things present. To Israel indeed pertained the promises which they must believe; but to them pertained also the giving of the law, and the service of God, which they must also dutifully, and conscientiously attend to, Rom. ix. 4. And this they are called to do in this psalm; where yet there is much of Christ, for the government of the church was in the hands of the eternal Word, before he was incarnate; and besides the ceremonial services were types and figures of evangelical worship. The people of Israel are here required to praise and exalt God, and to worship before him in consideration of these two things. (1.) The happy constitution of the government they were under, both in sacred and civil things, *ver. 1,—5.* (2.) Some instances of the happy administration of it, *ver. 6,—9.* In singing of this psalm we must set ourselves to exalt the name of God, as it is made known to us in the gospel, which we have much more reason to do than they had that lived under the law.

1. **T**HE LORD reigneth, let the people tremble: he sitteth *between* the cherubims, let the earth be moved. 2. The LORD is great in Zion, and he is high above all people. 3. Let them praise thy great and terrible name: *for it is holy.* 4. The kings strength also loveth judgment, thou dost establish equity, thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob. 5. Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool: *for he is holy.*

The foundation of all religion is laid in this truth, that *the Lord reigneth*: God governs the world by his providence, governs the church by his grace, and both by his Son. We are to believe not only that *the Lord liveth*, but that *the Lord reigneth*. This is the triumph of the Christian church, and here it was the triumph of the Jewish church, that Jehovah was their king; and hence it is inferred, *Let the people tremble*, i. e. 1. Even let the subjects of this kingdom tremble, for the Old Testament dispensation had much of terror in it: at mount Sinai, Israel, and even Moses himself, did *exceedingly fear and quake*; and then God was *terrible in his holy places*, even when he appeared in his peoples behalf, he did terrible things. But we are not now come to *that mount that burned with fire*, Heb. xii. 18. Now *the Lord reigns*, *let the earth rejoice*: then he ruled more by the power of holy fear, now of holy love. 2. Much more let the enemies of this kingdom tremble, for he will either bring them into obedience to his golden sceptre, or crush them with his iron rod. *The Lord reigns, though the people be stirred with indignation* at it; though they fret their hearts out, their rage is all in vain, he will set his King upon his holy hill of Zion in despite of them, *Psal. ii. 1,—6.* first or last he will make them *tremble*, Rev. vi. 15, &c. *The Lord reigns, let the earth be moved.* Those that submit to him shall be established, and not moved, *Psal. xcvi. 10.* but they that oppose him will be moved. Heaven and earth shall be shaken, and all nations; but the kingdom of Christ is what cannot be moved; the *things which cannot be shaken shall remain*, Heb. xii. 27. In *these* is continuance, Isa. lxiv. 5. God's

God's kingdom set up in Israel is here made the subject of the psalmist's praise.

1. God presided in the affairs of religion: *He sitteth between the cherubims*, ver. 1. as on his throne, to give law by the oracles thence delivered; as on the mercy-seat to receive petitions. This was the honour of Israel, that they had among them the *Shechinah*, or special presence of God, attended by the holy angels: the temple was the royal palace, and the Holy of Holies was the presence-chamber. *The Lord is great in Zion*, ver. 2. there he is known and praised, *Psal. lxxvi. 1; 2.* there he is served as great, more than any where else; *he is high there above all people*; as that which is high is exposed to view, and looked up to, so in Zion the perfections of the divine nature appear more conspicuous, and more illustrious than any where else. Therefore let them that dwell in Zion, and worship there, *praise thy great and terrible name*, and give thee the glory due unto it, *for it is holy*. The holiness of God's name makes it truly great to his friends, and terrible to his enemies, ver. 3. This is that which they above adore, *Holy, holy, holy*.

2. He was all in all in their civil government, ver. 4. As in Jerusalem was the testimony of Israel, whither the tribes went up, so there were set thrones of judgment, *Psal. cxxii. 4, 5.* their government was a theocracy: he raised up David to rule over them, (and some think this psalm was penned upon occasion of his quiet and happy settlement in the throne) and he is *the king*, whose strength loveth judgment: he is strong, all his strength he has from God, and his strength is not abused for the support of any wrong, as the power of great princes often is, but it loveth judgment; he doth justice with his power, and doth it with delight; and herein he was a type of Christ, to whom God would give *the throne of his father David, to do judgment and justice*: he has power to crush, but his strength loves judgment, i. e. he doth not rule with rigour, but with moderation, with wisdom and tenderness. The people of Israel had a good king; but they are here taught to look up to God, as he by whom their king reigns. *Thou dost establish equity*, i. e. God gave them those excellent laws by which they were governed; and *thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob*, i. e. he not only by his immediate providences often executed and enforced his own laws, but took care for the administration of justice among them by civil magistrates, who reigned by him, and by him did decree justice. Their judges judged for God, and their judgment was his, *2 Chron. xix. 6.*

Putting these two things together, we see what was the happiness of Israel above any other people, as Moses had described it, *Deut. iv. 7, 8.* that they had *God so nigh unto them*, sitting between the cherubims; and that they had *statutes and judgments so righteous*, by which equity was established, and God himself ruled in Jacob: from which he infers this command to that happy people, ver. 5. *Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool*; give him the glory of the good government you are under, as it is now established, both in church and state. Note, 1. The greater the public mercies are which we have a share in, the more we are obliged to bear a part in the publick homage paid to God: the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, especially, ought to be the matter of our praise. 2. When we draw nigh to God to worship him, our hearts must be filled with high thoughts of him, and he must be exalted in our souls. 3. The more we abase our selves, and the more prostrate we are before God, the more we exalt him. We must worship at his footstool, i. e. at his ark, which was as the footstool to the mercy-seat between the cherubims; or, we must cast our selves down upon the pavement of his courts; and good reason we have to be thus reverent, *for he is holy*; and his holiness should strike an awe upon us, as it doth on the angels themselves, *Isa. vi. 2, 3.*

6. Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name: they called upon the LORD, and he answered them. 7. He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them. 8. Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions. 9. Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill: for the LORD our God is holy.

The happiness of Israel in God's government is here further made out by some particular instances of his administration, especially with reference to those that were in their day the prime leaders, and most active, useful governors of that people, Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, in the former of whom the theocracy, or divine government, began; for they were employed to form Israel into a people, and in the last of whom that form of government in a great measure ended; for when the people rejected Samuel, and urged him to resign, they are said to reject God himself, that he should not be so immediately their king as he had been, *1 Sam. viii. 7.* for now they would have a king like all the nations. Moses, as well as Aaron, is said to be *among his priests*, for he executed the

priest's office till Aaron was settled in it, and he consecrated Aaron and his son; therefore the Jews call him the Priest of the priests. Now concerning these three chief rulers, observe,

1. The intimate communion they had with God, and the wonderful favour to which he admitted them. None of all the nations of the earth could produce three such men as these; that had such an intercourse with heaven, and whom God *knew by name*, *Exod. xxxiii. 17.*

Here is, (1.) Their gracious observance of God: no kingdom had men that honoured God so as these three men of the kingdom of Israel did. They honoured him, 1. By their prayers. Samuel, though not among his priests, yet was *among them that called on his name*; and for this they were all famous, *they called upon the Lord*; they relied not on their own wisdom or virtue, but in every emergency had recourse to God, towards him was their desire, and on him their dependence. 2. By their obedience; *they kept his testimonies, and the ordinances that he gave them*; i. e. they made conscience of their duty, and in every thing made God's word and law their rule, as knowing, that unless they did so, they could not expect their prayers should be answered, *Prov. xxviii. 9.* Moses did all according to the pattern shewed him; it is oft repeated, *According to all that God commanded Moses, so did he*: Aaron and Samuel did likewise. These were the greatest men, and most honourable, that were most eminent for keeping God's testimonies, and conforming to the rule of his word.

(2.) God's gracious acceptance of them: *he answered them*, and granted them the things which they called upon him for: they all wonderfully prevailed with God in prayer; miracles were wrought at their special instance and request; nay, he not only condescended to do that for them which they desired, as a prince for a petitioner, but he communed with them as one friend familiarly converseth with another, ver. 7. *He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar*. He often spake to Samuel, from his childhood the word of the Lord came to him, and, probably, sometimes he spake to him by a bright cloud overshadowing him: however, to Moses and Aaron he often spake out of the famous cloudy pillar, *Exod. xvi. 10.* Numb. xii. 5. Israel is now minded of this, for the confirming of their faith, that though they had not every day such sensible tokens of God's presence as the cloudy pillar was, yet to them that were their first founders, and to him that was their great reformer, God was pleased thus to manifest himself.

2. The good offices they did to Israel. They interceded for the people, and for them also they obtained many an answer of peace. *Moses stood in the gap*, and *Aaron between the living and the dead*; and when Israel was in distress, Samuel cried unto the Lord for them, *1 Sam. vii. 9.* This is here referred to, ver. 8. *Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God*, and, at their prayer, *thou wast a God that forgavest* the people they prayed for; and *though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions*, yet thou didst not cut them off from being a people, as their sin deserved. *Thou wast a God that wast propitious for them*, (so Dr. Hammond) for their sakes, and sparedst the people at their request, then, when thou wast about to take vengeance of their inventions, i. e. when thy wrath was so highly provoked against them, that it was just ready to break in upon them, to their utter overthrow. These were some of the many remarkable instances of God's dominion in Israel, more than in any other nation, for which the people are again called upon to praise God, ver. 9. *Exalt the Lord our God*, on account of what he hath done for us formerly, as well as of late, *and worship at his holy hill of Zion*, on which he hath now set his temple, and will shortly set his King, *Psal. ii. 6.* the former a type of the latter: there, as the centre of unity, let all God's Israel meet, with their adorations, *for the Lord our God is holy*, and appears so, not only in his holy law, but in his holy gospel.

P S A L M C.

It is with good reason that many sing this psalm very frequently in their religious assemblies, for it is very proper both to express and to excite pious and devout affections towards God in our approach to him in holy ordinances; and if our hearts go along with the words, we shall make melody in it to the Lord. The Jews say it was penned to be sung with their thank-offerings; perhaps, it was; but we say, that as there is nothing in it peculiar to their œconomy, so its beginning with a call to all lands to praise God, plainly extends it to the Gospel church. Here, 1. We are called upon to praise God, and rejoice in him, ver. 1, 2, 4. 2. We are furnished with matter for praise; we must praise him, considering his being and relation to us, ver. 3. and his mercy and truth, ver. 5. These are plain and common things, and therefore the more fit to be the matter of devotion.

¶ A psalm of praise.

1. **M**ake a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. 2. Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing. 3. Know ye that the LORD he is God, it is he that hath made us, and not we our selves; we are his people, and the sheep of

of his pasture. 4. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. 5. For the LORD is good, his mercy is everlasting: and his truth endureth to all generations.

Here, 1. The exhortations to praise are very importunate: the psalm doth indeed answer the title, A psalm of praise; it begins with that call which of late we have several times met with, *ver. 1. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands, or all the earth*, all the inhabitants of the earth. When all nations shall be disciples, and the gospel preached to every creature, then this summons will be fully answered to. But if we take the foregoing psalm to be (as we have opened it) a call to the Jewish church to rejoice in the administration of God's kingdom, which they were under (as the four before it were calculated for the days of the Messiah) this psalm, perhaps, was intended for profelytes, that came over, out of all lands, to the Jews religion. However, we have here,

(1.) A strong invitation to worship God; not that God needs us, or any thing we have or can do, but it is his will that we should *serve the Lord*, should devote our selves to his service, and employ our selves in it; and that we should not only serve him in all instances of obedience to his law, but that we should *come before his presence* in the ordinances which he has appointed, and in which he hath promised to manifest himself, *ver. 2.* that we should *enter into his gates, and into his courts*, *ver. 3.* that we should attend upon him among his servants, and keep there where he keeps court. In all acts of religious worship, whether in secret or in our families, we come into God's presence, and serve him; but it is in publick worship especially that we *enter into his gates, and into his courts*. The people were not permitted to enter into the holy place, there the priests only went in to minister; but let the people be thankful for their place in the courts of God's house, to which they were admitted, and gave their attendance there.

(2.) Great encouragement given us in worshipping God, to do it cheerfully, *ver. 2. Serve the Lord with gladness*. This intimates a prediction that in Gospel times there should be special occasion for joy; and it prescribes this as a rule of worship; let God be *served with gladness*. By holy joy we do really serve God; it is an honour to him to rejoice in him; and we ought to serve him with holy joy. Gospel worshippers should be joyful worshippers; if we serve God in uprightness, let us serve him with gladness, we must be willing and forward to it: glad when we are called to *go up to the house of the Lord*, Psalm cxxii. 1. looking upon it as the comfort of our lives to have communion with God; and we must be pleasant and cheerful in it, must say, *It is good to be here*, approaching to God, in every duty, as to God our exceeding joy, Psalm xxxiii. 4. We must *come before his presence with singing*, not only songs of joy, but songs of praise, *ver. 4. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving*; we must not only comfort our selves, but glorify God with our joy, and let him have the praise of that which we have the pleasure of. *Be thankful to him, and bless his name*; that is, 1. We must take it as a favour to be admitted into his service, and give him thanks that we have liberty of access to him, that we have ordinances instituted, and opportunity continued of waiting upon God in those ordinances. 2. We must intermix praise and thanksgiving with all our services: this golden thread must run through every duty, *Heb. xiii. 15.* for it is the work of angels. *In every thing give thanks*; in every ordinance, as well as in every providence.

2. The matter of praise, and motives to it, are very important, *ver. 3, 5.* Know ye what God is in himself, and what he is to you? Note, Knowledge is the mother of devotion, and of all obedience; blind sacrifices will never please a seeing God. Know it, *i. e.* consider and apply it, and then you will be more close and constant, more inward and serious, in the worship of him. Let us know then these seven things concerning the Lord Jehovah, with whom we have to do in all the acts of religious worship.

1. That *the Lord he is God*, the only living and true God; that he is a Being infinitely perfect, self-existent, and self-sufficient, and the fountain of all being: he is a God, and not a man as we are. He is an eternal Spirit, incomprehensible and independent; the first cause, and last end. The heathen worshipped the creatures of their own fancy; the workmen made it, therefore it is not God: we worship him that made us and all the world: he is God, and all other pretended deities are vanity, and a lie, and such as he hath triumphed over.

2. That he is our Creator: *It is he that hath made us, and not we our selves*. I find that I am, but cannot say, *I am that I am*, and therefore must ask whence am I? Who made me? *Where is God my Maker?* And it is the Lord Jehovah: He gave us being, gave us this being, is both the Former of our bodies, and the Father of our spirits. We did not, we could not make our selves; it is God's prerogative to be his own cause, our being is derived and depending.

3. That therefore he is our rightful Owner. The Majorites, by altering one letter in the Hebrew, read it, *He made us, and his we are*, or *to him we belong*. Put both the readings together, and

we learn, that because God *made us, and not we our selves*, therefore we are not our own but his. He hath an uncontestable right to, and property in us, and all things. His we are, to be acted by his power, disposed of by his will, and devoted to his honour and glory.

4. That he is our sovereign Ruler; *We are his people*, or subjects, and he is our prince, our rector or governor, that gives law to us as mortal agents, and will call us to an account for what we do. *The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver*; we are not at liberty to do what we will, but must always make conscience of doing as we are bidden.

5. That he is our bountiful Benefactor; we are not only his sheep, whom he is intitled to; but *the sheep of his pasture*, whom he takes care of. *The flock of his feeding*, so it may be read; therefore *the sheep of his hand*, at his dispose, because *the sheep of his pasture*, Psalm xcv. 7. He that made us maintains us, and gives us all good things richly to enjoy.

6. That he is a God of infinite mercy and goodness, *ver. 5. The Lord is good*, and therefore doth good; *his mercy is everlasting*; it is a fountain that can never be drawn dry; the saints that are now the sanctified vessels of mercy, will be to eternity the glorified monuments of mercy.

7. That he is a God of inviolable truth and faithfulness; *His truth endureth to all generations*, and no word of his shall fall to the ground as antiquated or revoked; the promise is sure to all the seed, from age to age.

PSALM CI.

David was for certain the penman of this psalm, and it has in it the genuine spirit of the man after God's own heart; it is a solemn vow he made to God when he took upon him the charge of a family, and of the kingdom. Whether it was penned when he entered upon the government immediately after the death of Saul, as some think, or when he began to reign over all Israel, and brought up the ark to the city of David, as others think, is not material; it is an excellent plan or model for the good government of a court, or the keeping up of virtue and piety, and, by that means, good order in it: but it is applicable to private families; it is the householder's psalm. It instructs all that are in any sphere of power, whether larger or narrower, to use their power so, as to make it a terror to evil doers, but a praise to them that do well. Here is, 1. The general scope of David's vow, *ver. 1, 2.* 2. The particulars of it, that he would detest and discountenance all manner of wickedness, *ver. 3, 4, 5, 7, 8.* and that he would favour and encourage such as were virtuous, *ver. 6.* Some think this may fitly be accommodated to Christ, the son of David, who governs his church, the city of the Lord, by these rules, and who loveth righteousness, and hateth wickedness. In singing this psalm, families, both governors and governed, should teach and admonish, and engage themselves, and one another, to walk by the rule of it, that peace may be upon them, and God's presence with them.

A psalm of David.

1. I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing. 2. I will behave my self wisely in a perfect way; O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. 3. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside, it shall not cleave to me. 4. A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person. 5. Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look, and a proud heart, will not I suffer. 6. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. 7. He that worketh deceit, shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies, shall not tarry in my sight. 8. I will early destroy all the wicked of the land: that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD.

David here cuts out to himself, and others, a pattern both of a good magistrate, and a good master of a family, and if these were careful to discharge the duty of their place, it would contribute very much to an universal reformation. Observe,

1. The chosen subject of the psalm, *ver. 1. I will sing of mercy and judgment*: that is, (1.) Of God's mercy and judgment, and then it looks back upon the dispensations of providence that had been concerning him since he was first anointed to be king; during which time he had met with many a rebuke, and much hardship on the one hand, and yet on the other hand had many wonderful deliverances wrought for him, and favours bestowed upon him; of these he will sing unto God. Note, 1. God's providences concerning his people are commonly mixed both of mercy and judgments, God hath set the one over against the other, and appointed them April days, showers and sunshine. It was so with David and his

his family, when there was mercy in the return of the ark there was judgment in the death of Uzza. 2. When God in his providence exerciseth us with a mixture of mercy and judgment, it is our duty to sing, and sing unto him, both of the one and of the other; we must be suitably affected with both, and make suitable acknowledgments to God of both. The Chaldee paraphrase of this is observable; *If thou bestowest mercy upon me, or if thou bring any judgment upon me, before thee, O Lord, will I sing my hymns for all*: whatever our outward condition is, whether joyful or sorrowful, still we must give glory to God, and sing praises to him; neither the laughter of a prosperous condition, nor the tears of an afflicted condition, must put us out of tune for sacred songs. Or, 2. It may be understood of David's mercy and judgment; he would in this psalm promise to be merciful and just, or wise, for judgment is often put for discretion. To do justly, and love mercy, is the sum of our duty: these he would covenant to make conscience of in that place and relation to which God had called him; and this in consideration of the various providences of God that had been concerning him. Family mercies, and family afflictions, are both of them calls to family religion. David puts his vow into a song or psalm, that he might the better keep it in his own mind, and frequently repeat it, and that it might the better be communicated to others, and preserved in his family, for a pattern to his sons and successors.

2. The general resolution David took up to carry himself carefully and conscientiously in his court, *ver. 2*. We have here, 1. A good purpose concerning his conversation; concerning his conversation in general, how he would behave himself in every thing; he would live by rule, and not at large, not walk at all adventures; he would, though a king, by a solemn covenant bind himself to his good behaviour: and concerning his conversation in his family particularly, not only how he would walk when he appeared in publick, when he sat in the throne; but how he would *walk within his house*, where he was more out of the eye of the world, but where he still saw himself under the eye of God. It is not enough to put off our religion when we go abroad, and appear before men; but we must govern our selves by it in our families. Those that are in publick stations, are not thereby excused from care in governing their families; nay, rather, they are most concerned to set a good example of *ruling their own houses well*, 1 Tim. iii. 5. when David had his hands full of publick affairs, yet he returned to bless his house, 2 Sam. vi. 20. He resolves, (1.) To act conscientiously, and with integrity, to *walk in a perfect way*, i. e. in the way of God's commandments, that is a *perfect way*, for the law of the Lord is perfect. This he will walk in *with a perfect heart*, with all sincerity, not dissembling either with God or men: When we make the word of God our rule, and are ruled by it; the glory of God our end, and aim at it; then we walk *in a perfect way with a perfect heart*. (2.) To act considerately, and with discretion; *I will behave myself wisely: I will understand, or instruct myself in a perfect way*, so some. I will walk circumspectly. Note, We must all resolve to walk by the rules of christian prudence, in the ways of christian piety. We must never turn aside out of the perfect way, under pretence of *behaving our selves wisely*; but while we keep to the good way we must be *wise as serpents*. 2. Here is a good prayer: *O when wilt thou come unto me!* Note, It is a desirable thing, when a man hath a house of his own, to have God come to him, and dwell with him in it; and those may expect God's presence that walk with a *perfect heart*, in a *perfect way*. If we compare the account which the historian gives of David, 1 Sam. xviii. 14. we shall find how exactly it answers his purpose and prayer, and that neither was in vain: David, as he purposed, *behaved himself wisely in all his ways*, and, as he prayed, *the Lord was with him*.

3. His particular resolution to practise no evil himself, *ver. 3*. *I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes*, i. e. I will not design or aim at any thing but what is for the glory of God, and the publick welfare: he will never have it in his eye to enrich himself by impoverishing his subjects, or enlarge his own prerogative by encroaching on their property. In all our worldly business we must see that that be right and good which we set our eyes upon, and not any forbidden fruit; and that we never seek that which we cannot have without sin. It is the character of a good man, that he shuts his eyes from seeing of evil, Isa. xxxiii. 15. Nay, *I hate the work of them that turn aside from the paths of equity*, Job xxxi. 7. not only I avoid it, but I abhor it, *it shall not cleave to me*: if any blot of injustice should come on my hands, it shall be washed off quickly.

4. His further resolution not to keep bad servants, nor to employ those about him that were vicious: He will not countenance them, nor shew them any favour, lest thereby he should harden them in their wickedness, and encourage others to do like them. He will not converse with them himself, nor admit them into the company of his other servants, lest they should spread the infection of sin in his family. He will not confide in them, nor put them in power under him, for they would certainly hinder every thing that is good, who did themselves hate to be reformed.

When he comes to instance in particulars, he doth not mention drunkards, adulterers, murderers, or blasphemers; such gross sinners as these he was in no danger of admitting into his house; nor did he need to covenant particularly against having fellowship

with them; but he instanceth in those sinners, who were less scandalous, but no less dangerous, and in reference to whom he needed to stand upon his guard with caution, and to behave himself wisely.

(1.) He will have nothing to do with spiteful malicious people, that are ill-natured; and will bear a grudge a great while, and care not what mischief they do to those they have a pique against; *ver. 4*. A *froward heart*, one that delights to be cross and perverse, *shall depart from me*, as not fit for society, the bond of which is love. *I will not know, i. e.* I will have no acquaintance or conversation, if I can help it, with such a wicked person; for a little of the leaven of malice and wickedness will leaven the whole lump.

(2.) Nor with slanderers, and those who take a pleasure in wounding their neighbours reputation secretly, *ver. 5*. *Who so privily slandereth his neighbour*, either raises or spreads false stories to the prejudice of his good name, *him will I cut off from my family and court*. Many endeavour to raise themselves into the favour of princes by unjust representations of persons and things which they think will please their prince; *If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked*, Prov. xxix. 12. But David will not only not hearken to them, but will balk the preferment of those that hope thus to curry favour with him: he will punish not only those that falsely accuse one another in open court, but that privily slander another. I wish David remembered this vow in the case of Mephibosheth and Ziba.

(3.) Nor with haughty, conceited, ambitious people; none do more mischief in a family, in a court, in a church, for *only by pride comes contention*; therefore him *that hath an high look, and a proud heart will I not suffer*; I will have no patience with them that are still grasping at all preferments, for it is certain they do not aim at doing good, but only at aggrandizing themselves and their families. God resists the proud, and so will David.

(4.) Nor with false deceitful people, that make no conscience of a lie or a fraud; *ver. 7*. *he that worketh deceit*, though he may insinuate himself into my family, yet as soon as he is discovered, he *shall not dwell within my house*. Some great men know how to serve their own purposes, by such as are skilful to deceive, and they are fit tools for them to work by; but David will make use of no such as agents for him: *He that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight*, but shall be expelled the house with indignation. Herein David was a man after God's own heart, for a *proud look* and a *lying tongue* are things which God hates; and he was also a type of Christ, who will in the great day banish from his presence *all that love and make a lie*, Rev. xxii. 15.

(5.) His resolution to put those in trust under him that were honest and good, *ver. 6*. *Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful in the land*. In chusing his servants and ministers of state he kept to the land of Israel, and would not employ foreigners; none shall be preferred but true-born Israelites, and those, such as were Israelites indeed, the *faithful in the land*, for even in that land there were those that were unfaithful. These faithful ones, his eyes shall be upon, to discover them and find them out, for they were modest, did not crowd into the city, to court preferment, but lived retired in the land, in the country, out of the way of it. Those are commonly most fit for places of honour and trust that are least fond of them, and therefore wise princes will spy out such in their recesses and privacies, and take them to dwell with them, and act under them. *He that walks in a perfect way*, that makes conscience of what he saith and doth, *he shall serve me*; the kingdom must be searched for honest men to make courtiers of; and if any man were better than other, he must be preferred. This was a good resolution of David's; but either he did not keep to it, or else his judgment was imposed upon when he made Ahithophel his right hand. It should be the care and endeavour of all masters of families, for their own sakes and their childrens, to take such servants into their families as they have reason to hope fear God. The son of David has his eyes upon the *faithful in the land*; his secret is with them, and they *shall dwell with him*. Saul chose servants for their goodliness, 1 Sam. viii. 16. but David for their goodness.

Lastly, His resolution to extend his zeal to the reformation of the city and country, as well as of the court, *ver. 8*. *I will early destroy all the wicked of the land*; i. e. all that are discovered and convicted; the law shall have its course against them. He would do his utmost to *destroy all the wicked*, so as that, there might be none left that were notoriously wicked; he would do it early, i. e. he would lose no time, and spare no pains, he would be forward and zealous in promoting the reformation of manners, and suppression of vice; and those must rise betimes that will do any thing to purpose in that work. That which he aimed at, was not only the securing of his own government and the peace of the country, but the honour of God in the purity of his church, *That I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord*: Not Jerusalem only, but the whole land was the *city of the Lord*; so is the gospel-church. It is the interest of the *city of the Lord* to be purged from *wicked doers*, who both blemish it, and weaken it; and it is therefore the duty of all to do what they can in their places towards so good a work, and to be zealously affected in it. The day is coming when the son of David shall cut off all wicked

doers from the new Jerusalem, for there shall not enter into it any that do iniquity.

P S A L M CII.

Some think David penned this psalm at the time of Absalom's rebellion; others that Daniel, Nehemiah, or some other prophet penned it for the use of the church, when it was in captivity in Babylon, because it seems to speak of the ruins of Sion, and of a time set for the rebuilding of it, which Daniel understood by books, Dan. ix. 2. or, perhaps, the psalmist was himself in great affliction, which he complains of in the beginning of the psalm, but (as in Psal. lxxvii. and elsewhere) he comforts himself under it with the consideration of God's eternity, and the church's prosperity and perpetuity, however, it was now distressed and threatened. But it is clear by the application of ver. 25, 26. to Christ, Heb. i. 11, 12. that the psalm has reference to the days of the Messiah, and speaks either of his affliction, or of the afflictions of his church for his sake. In the psalm we have (1.) A sorrowful complaint which the psalmist makes either for himself, or in the name of the church, of great afflictions which were very pressing, ver. 1.—11. (2.) Seasonable comfort fetched in against these grievances, (1) From the eternity of God, ver. 12, 23, 27. (2.) From a believing prospect of the deliverance which God would in due time work for his afflicted church, ver. 13,—22. and the continuance of it in the world, ver. 28. In singing this psalm, if we have not occasion to make the same complaints, yet we may take occasion to sympathize with those that have, and then the comfortable part of the psalm will be the more comfortable to us in the singing of it.

¶ A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord.

1. **H**ear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee. 2. Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble, incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call, answer me speedily. 3. For my days are consumed like smoke: and my bones are burnt as an hearth. 4. My heart is smitten, and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread. 5. By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my skin. 6. I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert. 7. I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house-top. 8. Mine enemies reproach me all the day: and they that are mad against me, are sworn against me. 9. For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping: 10. Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down. 11. My days are like a shadow that inclineth: and I am withered like grass.

The title of this psalm is very observable: It is a prayer of the afflicted; it was composed by one that was himself afflicted, afflicted with the church and for it; and on those that are of a publick spirit, afflictions of that kind lie heavier than any other. It is calculated for an afflicted state, and is intended for the use of others that may be in the like distress; for *whatsoever things were written before time, were written designedly for our use*: The whole word of God is of use to direct us in prayer; but here, as often elsewhere, the holy Ghost has drawn up our petition for us, has put words into our mouths, *Hos. xiv. 2. Take with you words*. Here is a prayer put into the hands of the afflicted; let them set, not their hands, but their hearts to it, and present it to God. Note, 1. It is many times the lot of the best saints in this world to be sorely afflicted. 2. Even good men may be almost overwhelmed with their afflictions, and may be ready to faint under them. 3. When our state is afflicted, and our spirits overwhelmed, it is our duty and interest to pray, and by prayer to pour out our complaints before the Lord; which intimates the leave God gives us to be free with him, and the liberty of speech we have before him, as well as liberty of access to him; it intimates also, what an ease it is to an afflicted spirit to unburthen itself by an humble representation of its grievances and griefs.

Such a representation we have here; in which,

1. The psalmist humbly begs of God to take notice of his affliction, and of his prayer in his affliction, ver. 1, 2. When we pray in our affliction, (1.) It should be our care that God would graciously hear us; for if our prayers be not pleasing to God, they will be to no purpose to ourselves. Let this therefore be in our eye, that our prayer may come unto God, even to his ears, Psal. xviii. 6. and in order to that, let us lift up the prayer, and our souls with it. (2.) It may be our hope that God will graciously hear us, because he has appointed us to seek him, and has promised we shall not seek him in vain. If we put up a prayer in faith, we may in faith say, *Hear my prayer, O Lord: Hear me*, that is, 1. Manifest thy self to me; *hide not thy face from me* in displeasure,

when I am in trouble: If thou dost not presently free me, yet let me know that thou favourest me; if I see not the operations of thy hand for me, yet let me see the smiles of thy face upon me. God's hiding his face is trouble enough to a good man, even in his prosperity, *Psal. xxx. 7. Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled*; but if, when we are in trouble God hides his face, the case is sad indeed. 2. Manifest thy self for me; not only hear me, but answer me; grant me the deliverance I am in want of, and in pursuit of; answer me speedily, even in the day when I call. When troubles press hard upon us, God gives us leave to be, in prayer, thus pressing upon him, yet with humility and patience.

2. He makes a lamentable complaint of the low condition, to which he was reduced by his afflictions.

(1.) His body was macerated and emaciated, and he was become a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones. As prosperity and joy are represented by making fat the bones, and the bones flourishing like an herb: so great trouble and grief are here represented by the contrary; my bones are burnt as an hearth, ver. 3. they cleave to my skin, ver. 5. nay, my heart is smitten, and withered like grass, ver. 4. it touches the vitals, and there is a sensible decay there. I am withered like grass, ver. 11. scorched with the burning heat of my troubles. If we be thus brought low by bodily distempers, let us not think it strange, the body is like grass, weak and of the earth, no wonder it withers then.

(2.) He was very melancholy, and of a sorrowful spirit: He was so taken up with the thoughts of his troubles, that he forgot to eat bread, ver. 4. he had no appetite to his necessary food, nor could he relish it. When God hides his face from a soul, the delights of sense will be sapless things. He was always sighing and groaning, as one pressed above measure, ver. 5. and this wasted him, and exhausted his spirits; he affected solitude as melancholy people do; his friends deserted him and were shy of him, and he cared as little for their company, ver. 6, 7. I am like a pelican of the wilderness, or a bittern (so some) that make a doleful noise; I am like an owl, that affects to lodge in deserted ruined buildings; I watch, and am as a sparrow upon the house-top: I live in a garret, and there spend my hours in poring on my troubles, and bemoaning myself. Those who do thus when they are in sorrow, humour themselves indeed; but they prejudice themselves, and know not what they do, nor what advantage they hereby give to the tempter. In affliction, we should sit alone, to consider our ways, Lam. iii. 28. but not sit alone to indulge an inordinate grief.

(3.) He was evil spoken of by his enemies, and all manner of evil said against him. When his friends went off from him, his foes set themselves against him, ver. 8. Mine enemies reproach me all the day, designing thereby both to create vexation to himself, for an ingenuous mind regrets reproach, and to bring an odium upon him before men. When they could not otherwise reach him, they shot these arrows at him, even bitter words, and in this they were unwearied, they did it all the day, it was a continual dropping. His enemies were very outrageous, they are mad against me, and very obstinate and implacable; they are sworn against me, as the Jews that bound themselves with an oath that they would kill Paul; or, they have sworn against me as accusers, to take away my life.

(4.) He fasted and wept under the tokens of God's displeasure, ver. 9, 10. I have eaten ashes like bread, i. e. instead of eating my bread, I have laid down in dust and ashes, and I have mingled my drink with weeping; when I should have refreshed myself with drinking, I have only eased my self with weeping. And what is the matter? He tells us, ver. 10. Because of thy wrath. It was not so much the trouble itself that troubled him, as the wrath of God, which he was under the apprehensions of, as the cause of the trouble. This, this was the wormwood and the gall, in the affliction and the misery. Thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down; as that which we cast to the ground, with a design to dash it to pieces, we lift it up first, that we may throw it down with the more violence; or, thou hast formerly lifted me up in honour and joy, and uncommon prosperity; but the remembrance of that aggravates the present grief, and makes it the more grievous. We must eye the hand of God, both in lifting us up, and casting us down, and say, blessed be the name of the Lord, who both gives and takes away.

(5.) He looked upon himself as a dying man; my days are consumed like smoke, ver. 3. which vanisheth away presently: Or, they are consumed in smoke, of which nothing remains; they are like a shadow, that inclineth, ver. 11. like the evening-shadow, or a forerunner of night approaching. Now all this, though it seems to speak the psalmist's personal calamities, and therefore is properly a prayer for a particular person afflicted, yet is supposed to be a description of the afflictions of the church of God, with which the psalmist sympathizeth, making publick grievances his own. The mystical body of Christ is sometimes, like the psalmist's body here, withered and parched, nay, like dead and dry bones. The church sometimes is forced into the wilderness, seems lost, and gives up herself for gone, under the tokens of God's displeasure.

12. But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever, and thy remembrance unto all generations. 13. Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea the set time is come. 14. For thy servants

vants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof. 15. So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD: and all the kings of the earth thy glory. 16. When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. 17. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. 18. This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created, shall praise the LORD. 19. For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary: from heaven did the LORD behold the earth: 20. To hear the groaning of the prisoner, to loose those that are appointed to death; 21. To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem: 22. When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms to serve the LORD.

Many exceeding great and precious comforts are here thought of, and mustered up, to balance the foregoing complaints, for *unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness*, so that though they are cast down, they are not in despair. It is bad with the psalmist himself, bad with the people of God, but he hath many considerations to revive himself with.

1. We are dying creatures, and our interests and comforts dying, but God is an everliving, everlasting God, *ver. 12. My days are like a shadow*; there is no remedy, night is coming upon me; but *thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever*: Our life is transient, but thine is permanent; our friends die, but our God dies not; what threatened us cannot touch him; our names will be written in the dust, and buried in oblivion, but *thy remembrance shall be unto all generations*, to the end of time, nay, to eternity, thou shalt be known and honoured. A good man loves God better than himself, and therefore can balance his own sorrow and death, with the pleasing thought of the unchangeable blessedness of the eternal mind. God *endures for ever*, his church's faithful patron and protector; and his honour and perpetual remembrance being very much bound up in her interests, we may be confident that they shall not be neglected.

2. Poor Sion is now in distress, but there will come a time for her relief and succour, *ver. 13. Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion*; the hope of deliverance is built upon the goodness of God, thou wilt *have mercy upon Zion*, for she is become an object of thy pity; and upon the power of God thou shalt arise and have mercy, shalt stir up thyself to do it, shalt do it in contempt of all the opposition made by the church's enemies; *the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this*. And that which is very encouraging is, that there is a time set for the deliverance of the church, which not only will come some time, but will come at the time appointed, the time which infinite wisdom hath appointed, and therefore it is the best time; and which eternal truth has fixed it to, and therefore it is a certain time, and shall not be forgotten or further adjourned. At the end of seventy years the time to favour Zion, by delivering her from the daughter of Babylon, was to come, and at length it did come.

Sion was now in ruins, *i. e.* the temple that was built in the city of David: the favouring of Zion is the building of it up again, as it is explained, *ver. 16*. This is expected from the favour of God; that will set all to rights, and nothing but that, and therefore Daniel prays, *Dan. ix. 17. Cause thy face to shine out upon thy sanctuary, which is desolate*. And the building up of Zion is as great a favour to any people as they can desire: No blessing more desirable to a ruined state than the restoring and re-establishing of their church-privileges.

Now this is here wished for and longed for,

(1.) Because it would be a great rejoicing to Sion's friends, *ver. 14. Thy servants take pleasure even in the stones of the temple*, though they were thrown down and scattered, and *favour the dust*, the very rubbish and ruins of it. Observe here, that when the temple was ruined, yet the stones of it were to be had for a new building, and there were those who encouraged themselves with that, for they had a favour even for the dust of it. Those that truly love the church of God, love it when it is in affliction as well as when it is in prosperity; and it is a good ground to hope that God will favour the ruins of Sion, when he puts it into the heart of his people to favour them, and to shew that they do so by their prayers and by their endeavours; as it is also a good plea with God for mercy for Sion, that there are those who are so affectionately concerned for her, and are *waiting for the salvation of the Lord*.

(2.) Because it would have a good influence upon Sion's neighbours, *ver. 5*. It will be a happy means, perhaps, of their conversion, however, of their conviction; for *so the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord*, shall have high thoughts of him and his people, and even the kings of the earth shall be affected with his glory; they shall have better thoughts of the church of God, than they have had, when God, by his providence, thus puts an honour upon it; they shall be afraid of doing any thing against it, when they see God taking its part; nay, they shall say we will go with you, for we have *seen that God is with you*, *Zech. viii. ult.* Thus

it is said, *Ezth. viii. 17. that many of the people of the land became Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell upon them*.

(3.) Because it would redound to the honour of Sion's God, *ver. 16. When the Lord shall build up Sion*, they take it for granted it will be done, for God himself hath undertaken it, and *he shall then appear in his glory*; and for that reason all that have made his glory their highest end, desire it, and pray for it. Note, The edifying of the church will be the glorifying of God, and therefore we may be assured it will be done in the set time. They that pray in faith, *Father, glorify thy name*, may receive the same answer to that prayer which was given to Christ himself by a voice from heaven, *I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again*, though now for a good time it may be eclipsed;

3. The prayers of God's people now seem to be slighted; and no notice taken of them, but they will be reviewed, and greatly encouraged, *ver. 17. He will regard the prayer of the destitute*. It was said, *ver. 16. that God will appear in his glory*; such a glory as kings themselves shall *stand in awe of*, *ver. 15. When great men appear in their glory*, they are apt to look with disdain upon the poor that apply themselves to them, but the great God will not do so. Observe, (1.) The meanness of the petitioners, they are the destitute; it is an elegant word that is here used, which signifies the heath in the wilderness, a low shrub or bush, like the hyssop of the wall. They are supposed to be in a low and broken state, enriched with spiritual blessings, but destitute of temporal good things: The poor, the weak, the desolate, the stript; thus variously is the word rendered; or it may signify that low and broken spirit, which God looks for in all that draw nigh to him, and which he will graciously look upon. This will bring them to their knees; destitute people should be praying people, *1 Tim. v. 5*. (2.) The favour of God to them, notwithstanding their meanness: He will regard their prayer, and will look at it, will peruse their petition, *2 Chr. vi. 40. and he will not despise their prayer*. More is implied than is expressed; he will value it, and be well pleased with it, and will return an answer of peace to it, which is the greatest honour that can be put upon it: But it is thus expressed, because others despise their praying, they themselves fear God will despise it, and he was thought to despise it while their affliction was prolonged, and their prayers lay unanswered. When we consider our own meanness and vileness, our darkness and deadness, and manifold defects in our prayers, we have cause to suspect that our prayers will be received with disdain in heaven; but we are here assured of the contrary, for we have an advocate with the Father, and are under grace, not under the law.

This instance of God's favour to his praying people, though they are destitute, will be a lasting encouragement to prayer, *ver. 18. This shall be written for the generation to come, that none may despair*, though they be destitute, nor think their prayers forgotten because they have not an answer to them presently. Others experiences should be our encouragements to seek unto God, and trust in him. And if we have the comfort of others experiences, it is fit we should give God the glory of them, *the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord*, for what he hath done both for them, and for their predecessors; many that are now unborn, by reading the history of the church, shall be wrought upon to turn proselytes. The people that shall be created anew by divine grace, that are a kind of *first fruits of his creatures*, shall praise the Lord for his answers to their prayers when they were more destitute.

4. The prisoners under condemnation unjustly seem as sheep appointed for the slaughter, but care shall be taken for their discharge, *ver. 19, 20. God hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary, from heaven*, where he hath prepared his throne; that high place, that holy place; thence did *the Lord behold the earth*, for it is a place of prospect, and nothing on this earth is, or can be hid from his all-seeing eye; he looks down not to take a view of the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; but to do acts of grace, to hear the groaning of the prisoners, which we would desire to be out of the hearing of; and not only to hear them, but to help them, to loose those that are appointed for death, then, when there is but a step between them and it. Some understand it of the release of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, God *heard their groaning* there, as he did when they were in Egypt, *Exod. iii. 7, 9. and came down to deliver them*. God takes notice not only of the prayers of his afflicted people, which are the language of grace, but even of their groans, which are the language of nature. See the divine pity, in hearing the prisoners groans, and the divine power in loosing the prisoners bonds; even when they are appointed to death, and are pinioned and double shackled: We have an instance in Peter, *Act. xii. 6*.

Such instances as these of the divine condescension and compassion will help, 1. *To declare the name of the Lord in Sion*, and to make it appear, that he answers his name, which he himself proclaimed, *The Lord God, gracious and merciful*; and this declaration of his name in Sion, shall be the matter of his praise in Jerusalem, *ver. 21. If God by his providences declare his name*, we must by our acknowledgments of them declare his praise, which ought to be the echo of his name. God will discharge his people that were prisoners and captives in Babylon, *That they may declare his name in Sion*, the place he has chosen to put his name there, and

his praise in Jerusalem, at their return thither; in the land of their captivity they could not sing the songs of Sion, *Psal. cxxxvii. 3, 4.* and therefore God brought them again to Jerusalem, that they might sing them there. For this end, God gives liberty from bondage; *Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name, Psal. cxxxii. 7.* And life from the dead, *Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee, Psal. cxix. 175.* 2. They will help to draw in others to the worship of God, *ver. 22. when the people of God are gathered together at Jerusalem,* (as they were after their return out of Babylon) many out of the kingdoms joined with them to serve the Lord. This was fulfilled, *Ezr. vi. 21.* where we find that not only the children of Israel, that were come out of captivity, but many that had separated themselves to them from among the heathen, did keep the feast of unleavened bread with joy. But it may look further at the conversion of the Gentiles, to the faith of Christ in the latter days. Christ has proclaimed liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound, that they may declare the name of the Lord in the gospel-church, in which Jews and Gentiles shall unite.

23. He weakned my strength in the way; he shortened my days. 24. I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years are throughout all generations. 25. Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. 26. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. 27. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. 28. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.

We may here observe,

1. The imminent danger that the Jewish church was in, of being quite extirpated and cut off by the captivity in Babylon, *ver. 23. He weakened my strength in the way.* They were for many ages in the way to the performance of the great promise made to their fathers, concerning the Messiah, longing as much for it as ever a traveller did to be at his journey's end; the legal institutions led them in the way; but when the ten tribes were lost in Assyria, and the two almost lost in Babylon, the strength of that nation was weakned, and in all appearance its day shortned, for they said *our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts, Ezek. xxxvii. 11.* And then what comes of the promise, that Shiloh should arise out of Judah, the star out of Jacob, and the Messiah out of the family of David? If these fail the promise fails. This the psalmist speaks of as in his own person, and it is very applicable to two of the common afflictions of this time. (1.) To be sickly; bodily distempers soon *weaken our strength in the way*, make the keepers of the house to tremble, and the strong men to bow themselves. (2.) To be short-lived; where the former is felt, this is feared; when in the midst of our days according to a course of nature, our strength is weakned, what can we expect, but that the *number of our months should be cut off in the midst*, and what should we do but provide accordingly? We must own God's hand in it, for in his hand our strength and time are; and must reconcile it to his love, for it has often been the lot of those that have used their strength well yet to have it weakned; and of those that could very ill be spared, yet to have their days shortned.

2. A prayer for the continuance of it, *ver. 24. O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days.* Let not this poor Church be cut off in the midst of the days assigned it by the promise; let it not be cut off till the Messiah is come, *Destroy it not, for that blessing is in it, Isai. lxxv. 8.* It is a criminal, but she pleads her belly, and for the sake of that hath a reprieve. This is a prayer for the afflicted, and which, with submission to the will of God, we may in faith put up, that God would not *take us away in the midst of our days*; but that if it be his will he would spare us to do him further service, and to be made riper for heaven.

3. A plea to inforce this prayer, taken from the eternity of the Messiah promised, *ver. 25, 26, 27.* The apostle quotes these verses, *Heb. i. 10, 11, 12.* and tells us, *he saith this to the son,* and in that exposition we must acquiesce. It is very comfortable in reference to all the changes that pass over the church, and all the dangers it is in, that *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever.* Thy years are throughout all generations, and cannot be shortned. As it is likewise comfortable, in reference to the decay and death of our own bodies, and the removal of our friends from us, that God is an everlasting God, and therefore if he be ours, in him we may have everlasting consolation. In this plea, observe, how to illustrate the eternity of the Creator, he compares it with the mutability of the creature; for it is God's sole prerogative to be unchangeable.

(1.) God made the world, and therefore had a being before it from eternity; the Son of God, the eternal Word made the world: It is expressly said, *All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made, and therefore the same was in the beginning from eternity with God, and was God, Joh. i. 1,*

2, 3. *Col. i. 16. Eph. iii. 9. Heb. i. 2.* Earth and heaven, and the hosts of both include the universe and its fulness, and these derive their being from God by his Son, *ver. 25. Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth,* that is founded on the seas, and on the floods, and yet it abideth; much more shall the church which is built upon a rock. The heavens are the work of thy hands, and by thee are all the motions and influences directed; God is therefore the fountain, not only of all being, but of all power and dominion. See how fit the great Redeemer is to be intrusted with all power, both in heaven and in earth, since he himself, as Creator of both, perfectly knows both, and is intitled to both.

(2.) God will unmake the world again, and therefore shall have a being to eternity, *ver. 26, 27. They shall perish, for thou shalt change them,* and therefore, no doubt, *thou shalt endure; thou art the same.* God and the world, Christ and the creature are rivals for the innermost and uppermost place in the soul of man, the immortal soul; now what is here said, one would think were enough to decide the controversy presently, and to determine us for God and Christ. For 1. A portion in the creature is fading and dying; *they shall perish,* they will not last so long as we shall last; the day is coming, when *the earth and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up,* and then what will become of those that have laid up their treasure in it! Heaven and earth shall *wax old as a garment*, not by a gradual decay; but when the set time comes, they shall be laid aside like an old garment, that we have no more occasion for. *As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed;* not annihilated, but altered, it may be, so as that they shall not be at all the same, but *new heavens and a new earth.* See God's sovereign dominion over heaven and earth, he can change them as he pleaseth, and when he pleaseth, and the constant changes they are subject to in the revolutions of day and night, summer and winter, are earnest of their last and final change, when *the heavens and time they measure shall be no more.* 2. A portion in God is perpetual and everlasting, for *thou art the same,* subject to no change, and *thy years have no end, ver. 27.* Christ will be the same in the performance, that he was in the promise; the same to his church in captivity, that he was to his church at liberty. Let not the church fear the weakning of her strength, or the shortning of her days, while Christ himself is both her strength and her life, and he is the same; and hath said, *because I live, ye shall live also.* Christ came in the fulness of time, and set up his kingdom in spite of the power of the Old Testament Babylon, and he will keep it up in spite of the power of the New Testament Babylon.

4. A comfortable assurance of an answer to this prayer, *ver. 28. The children of thy servants shall continue;* since Christ is the same, the church shall continue from one generation to another; from the eternity of the head, we may infer the perpetuity of the body, though oft weak and distempered, and even at death's door. They that hope to *wear out the saints of the most High* will be mistaken. Christ's servants shall have children; those children shall have a seed, *i. e.* a succession of professing people; the church as well as the world, is under the influence of that blessing: *Be fruitful and multiply.* These children shall continue, not in their own persons, by reason of death, but in their seed, which shall be established before God, *i. e.* in his service, and by his grace; the entail of religion shall not be cut off while the world stands, but as one generation of good people passeth away, another shall come, and thus the throne of Christ shall endure.

P S A L M CIII.

This psalm calls more for devotion than exposition; it is a most excellent psalm of praise, and of general use. The psalmist, 1. Stirs up himself, and his own soul, to praise God, *ver. 1, 2.* for his favour to him in particular, *ver. 3,—5.* to the church in general, and to all good men, to whom he is and will be just, and kind, and constant, *ver. 6,—18.* and for his government of the world, *ver. 19.* 2. He desires the assistance of the holy angels, and all the works of God, in praising him, *ver. 20,—22.* In singing this psalm we must, in a special manner, get our hearts affected with the goodness of God, and enlarged in love and thankfulness.

¶ A Psalm of David.

1. **B**less the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. 2. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. 3. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities: who healeth all thy diseases. 4. Who redeemeth thy life from destruction: who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies. 5. Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things: so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles.

David is here communing with his own heart, and he is no fool that thus talks to himself, and excites his own soul to that which is good. Observe,

1. How he stirs up himself to the duty of praise, *ver. 1, 2.* (1.) It is the Lord that is to be blessed, and spoken well of, for he is the

the fountain of all good, whatever are the channels or cisterns; it is to his name, his holy name, that we are to consecrate our praise; giving thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. (2.) It is the soul that is to be employed in blessing God, and all that is within us. We make nothing of our religious performances, if we do not make heart-work of them; if that which is within us, nay, if all that is within us be not engaged in them. The work requires the inward man, the whole man, and all little enough. (3.) In order to our return of praises to God, there must be a grateful remembrance of the mercies we have received from him: *Forget not all his benefits.* If we do not give thanks for them, we do forget them; and that is unjust as well as unkind; since, in all God's favours, there is so much that is memorable. O my soul! to thy shame be it spoken, thou hast forgotten many of his benefits; but sure thou wilt not forget them all, for thou shouldst not have forgotten any.

2. How he furnisheth himself with abundant matter for praise, and that which is very affecting. Come, my soul, consider what God hath done for thee.

(1.) He hath pardoned thy sins, ver. 3. he hath forgiven and doth forgive all thine iniquities. This is mentioned first, because by the pardon of sin that is taken away, which kept good things from us, we are restored to the favour of God, which bestows good things on us. Think what the provocation was, it was iniquity, and yet pardoned; how many the provocations were, and yet all pardoned; *He hath forgiven all our trespasses.* It is a continued act; he is still forgiving, as we are still sinning and repenting.

(2.) He hath cured thy sickness; the corruption of nature is the sickness of the soul, it is its disorder, and threatens its death: this is cured in sanctification; when sin is mortified, the disease is healed; though complicated, it is all healed. Our crimes were capital, but God saves our lives by pardoning them; our diseases were mortal, but God saves our lives by healing them. These two go together, for as for God his work is perfect, and not done by the halves: if God take away the guilt of sin, by pardoning mercy, he will break the power of it, by renewing grace. Where Christ is made righteousness to any soul, he is made sanctification, 1 Cor. i. 30.

(3.) He hath rescued thee from danger. A man may be in peril of life, not only by his crimes, or his diseases, but by the power of his enemies; and therefore here also we experience the divine goodness, who redeemed thy life from destruction, ver. 4. from the destroyer; from hell, so the Chaldee; from the second death. The redemption of the soul is precious, we cannot compass it, and therefore are the more indebted to divine grace that has wrought it out, to him who hath obtained eternal redemption for us. See Job xxxiii. 24, 28.

(4.) He hath not only saved thee from death and ruin, but has made thee truly and completely happy, with honour, pleasure, and long life.

1. He hath given thee true honour, and great honour, no less than a crown: *He crowneth thee with his loving kindness, and tender mercies;* and what greater dignity is a poor soul capable of, than to be advanced into the love and favour of God! *This honour have all his saints.* What is the crown of glory but God's favour?

2. He hath given thee true pleasure; he satisfieth thy mouth with good things, ver. 5. and it is only the favour and grace of God that can give satisfaction to a soul, can suit its capacities, supply its needs, and answer its desires; nothing but divine wisdom can undertake to fill its treasures, Prov. viii. 21. other things will surfeit; but not satiate, Eccl. vi. 7. Isa. lv. 2.

3. He hath given thee a prospect and pledge of long life; *thy youth is renewed like the eagles.* The eagle is long-lived, and, as naturalists say, when she is near an hundred years old, casts all her feathers, (as indeed she changes them in a great measure every year at moulting time) and fresh ones come, so that she becomes young again. When God, by the graces and comforts of his Spirit, recovers his people from their decays, and fills them with new life and joy, which is to them an earnest of eternal life and joy, then they may be said to return to the days of their youth, Job xxxiii. 25.

6. The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. 7. He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. 8. The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. 9. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. 10. He hath not dealt with us after our sins: nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. 11. For as the heaven is high above the earth: so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. 12. As far as the east is from the west: so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. 13. Like as a father pitieth his children: so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. 14. For he knoweth our frame: he remembereth that we are dust. 15. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. 16. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.

17. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him: and his righteousness unto children's children: 18. To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

Hitherto the psalmist had only looked back upon his own experiences, and thence fetched matter for praise; here he looks abroad, and takes notice of his favour to others also, for in them we should rejoice, and give thanks for them; all the saints being fed at a common table, and sharing in the same blessings.

1. Truly God is good to all, ver. 6. He executeth righteousness and judgment, not only for his own people, but for all that are oppressed; for even in common providence, he is the patron of wronged innocency, and one way or other will plead the cause of those that are injured against their oppressors. It is his honour to humble the proud, and help the helpless.

2. He is in a special manner good to Israel, to every Israelite indeed, that is of a clean and upright heart.

1. He hath revealed himself and his grace to us, ver. 7. He made known his ways unto Moses, and by him his acts to the children of Israel; not only by his rod to those who then lived, but by his pen to succeeding ages. Note, Divine revelation is one of the first and greatest of divine favours with which the church is blessed; for God reduceth us to himself by revealing himself to us; and gives us all good by giving us knowledge. He hath made known his acts and his ways, i. e. his nature, and the methods of his dealing with the children of men, that they may know both what to conceive of him, and what to expect from him; so Dr. Hammond. Of, by his ways, we may understand his precepts, the way which he requires us to walk in; and by his acts, or designs (as the word signifies) his promises and purposes what to do with us. Thus fairly doth God deal with us.

2. He hath never been rigorous and severe with us, but always tender, full of compassion, and ready to forgive.

(1.) It is in his nature to be so, ver. 8. The Lord is merciful and gracious; this was his way which he made known unto Moses at mount Horeb, when he thus proclaimed his name, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. in answer to Moses's request, chap. xxxiii. 13. I beseech thee, shew me thy way, that I may know thee. It is my way, saith God, to pardon sin. 1. He is not soon angry, ver. 8. He is slow to anger, not extreme to mark what we do amiss, nor ready to take advantage against us. He bears long with those that are very provoking, defers punishing, that he may give space to repent, and doth not speedily execute the sentence of his law. And he could not be thus slow to anger, if he were not plenteous in mercy, the very Father of mercies. 2. He is not long angry; for, ver. 9. He will not always chide, though we always offend, and deserve chiding. Though he signify his displeasure against us for our sins by the rebukes of providence, and the reproaches of our own consciences, and thus cause grief, yet he will have compassion, and will not always keep us in pain and terror, no not for our sins, but after the spirit of bondage, will give the spirit of adoption. How unlike are those to God who always chide, who take every occasion to chide, and never know when to take up! What would become of us, if God should deal so with us? He will not keep his anger for ever, against his own people, but will gather them with everlasting mercies, Isa. liv. 8. lvii. 16.

(2.) We have found him so; we, for our parts, must own, that he hath not dealt with us after our sins, ver. 10. The scripture saith a great deal of the mercy of God; and we may all set to our seal that it is true; that we have experienced it. If he had not been a God of patience, we had been in hell long ago; but he hath not rewarded us after our iniquities; so they will say, who know what sin deserves. He hath not inflicted the judgments which we have merited, nor deprived us of the comforts which we have forfeited; which should make us think the worse, and not the better of sin; for God's patience should lead us to repentance, Rom. ii. 4.

3. He hath pardoned our sins; not only mine iniquity, ver. 3. but our transgressions, ver. 12. though it is of our own benefit by the pardoning mercy of God that we are to take the comfort, yet of the benefit others have by it we must give him the glory. Observe, 1. The transcendent riches of God's mercy, ver. 11. As the heaven is high above the earth, so high, that the earth is but a point to the vast expanse; so God's mercy is above the merits of those that fear him most; so much above and beyond them, that there is no proportion at all between them: the greatest performances of man's duty cannot demand the least tokens of God's favour as a debt, and therefore all the seed of Jacob will join with him in owning themselves less than the least of all God's mercies, Gen. xxxii. 10. Observe, God's mercy is thus great towards them that fear him, not towards them that trifle with him. We must fear the Lord and his goodness. 2. The fulness of his pardons, an evidence of the riches of his mercy, ver. 12. As far as the east is from the west (which two quarters of the world are of greatest extent, because all known and inhabited, and therefore geographers that way reckon their longitudes) so far hath he removed our transgressions from us, so that they shall never be laid to our charge, nor rise up in judgment against us. The sins of believers shall be remembered

no more, shall not be mentioned unto them, they shall be fought for, and not found. If we thoroughly forsake them, God will thoroughly forgive them.

4. He hath pitied our sorrows, *ver. 13, 14.* Observe, 1. Whom he pities; *them that fear him*, i. e. all good people, who in this world may become objects of pity, upon account of the grievances which they are not only born, but born again to. Or it may be understood of those who have not yet received the spirit of adoption, but are yet trembling at his word, those he pities, Jer. xxxi. 18, 20. 2. How he pities, *as a father pitieth his children*, and doth them good as there is occasion. God is a Father to them that fear him, and owns them for his children, and he is tender of them as a father. The father pities his children that are weak in knowledge, and instructs them; pities them when they are froward, and bears with them; pities them when they are sick, and comforts them, Isa. lxvi. 13. when they are fallen, and helps them up again; when they have offended, and, upon their submission, forgives them; when they are wronged, and rights them. Thus the Lord pitieth them that fear him. 3. Why he pities; *for he knoweth our frame*. He has reason to know our frame, for he framed us, and having himself made man of the dust, he remembers that he is dust, not only by constitution, but by sentence; *Dust thou art*. He considers the frailty of our bodies, and the folly of our souls, how little we can do, and expects accordingly from us; how little we can bear, and lays accordingly upon us; in all which appears the tenderness of his compassion.

5. He hath perpetuated his covenant mercy, and thereby provided relief for our frailty, *ver. 15, 16, 17, 18.* See here, 1. How short man's life is, and of what uncertain continuance; the lives even of great men, and good men, are so; and neither their greatness nor their goodness can alter the property of them. *As for man, his days are as grass*, which grows out of the earth, rises but a little way above it, and soon withers and returns to it again. See Isa. xl. 6, 7. Man, in his best estate, seems somewhat more than grass, he flourishes and looks gay, yet then he is but like a flower of the field, which, though distinguished a little from the grass, will wither with it. The flower of the garden is commonly more choice and valuable, and though in its own nature withering, yet will last the longer for its being sheltered by the garden-wall, and the gardener's care; but the flower of the field (to which life is here compared) is not only withering in it self, but exposed to the cold blasts, and liable to be crot and trod on by the beasts of the field. Man's life is not only wasting of it self, but its period may be anticipated by a thousand accidents. When the flower is in its perfection, a blasting wind, unseen, unlooked for, passeth over it, and it is gone, it hangs the head, drops the leaves, dwindles into the ground again, and the place thereof, which was proud of it, now knows it no more. Such a thing is man, God considers it, and pities him; let him consider it himself, and be humble, dead to this world, and thoughtful of another.

2. How long and lasting God's mercy is to his people, *ver. 17, 18.* it will continue longer than their lives, and will survive their present state. Observe,

1. The description of those to whom this mercy belongs; they are such as fear God, i. e. are truly religious from a principle. 1. They live a life of faith; for they keep God's covenant, having taken hold of it, they keep hold of it, fast hold, and will not let it go. They keep it as a treasure, keep it as their portion; and would not for all the world part with it, for it is their life. 2. They live a life of obedience; they remember his commandments to do them, else they do not keep his covenant. Those only shall have the benefit of God's promises that make conscience of his precepts. See who they are that have a good memory (as well as a good understanding, Psalm cxi. 10.) those that remember God's commandments, not to talk of them, but to do them, and to be ruled by them.

2. The continuance of the mercy which belongs to such as these, it will last them longer than their lives on earth, and therefore they need not be troubled though their lives be short, since death itself will be no abridgment, no infringement, of their bliss. God's mercy is better than life, for it will out-live it.

(1.) To their souls, which are immortal, to them the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting; from everlasting in the counsels of it, to everlasting in the consequences of it; in their election, before the world was; and their glorification, when this world shall be no more; for they are predestinated to the inheritance, Eph. i. 11. and look for the mercy of the Lord, the Lord Jesus, unto eternal life.

(2.) To their seed, which shall be kept up to the end of time, Psalm cii. 28. His righteousness, the truth of his promise, unto children's children, provided they tread in the steps of their predecessors piety, and keep his covenant, as they did, then shall mercy be preserved to them, even to a thousand generations.

19. The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens: and his kingdom ruleth over all. 20. Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkning unto the voice of his word. 21. Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts, ye ministers of his that do his pleasure. 22. Bless the

LORD, all his works, in all places of his dominion: blest the LORD, O my soul.

Here is, 1. The doctrine of universal providence laid down, *ver. 19.* He hath secured the happiness of his peculiar people by promise and covenant, but the order of mankind, and the world in general, he secures by common providence. The Lord hath a throne of his own, a throne of glory, a throne of government; he that made all, rules all, and both by a word of power; he hath prepared his throne, has fixed and established it, that it cannot be shaken; he has fore-ordained all the measures of his government, and doth all according to the counsel of his own will. He has prepared it in the heavens, above us, and out of sight; for he holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth a cloud upon it, Job xxvi. 9. yet can himself judge through the dark cloud, Job xxii. 13. Hence the heavens are said to rule, Dan. iv. 26. and we are led to consider this by the influence which even the visible heavens have upon this earth, their dominion, Job xxxviii. 33. Gen. i. 16. But, though God's throne is in heaven, and there he keeps his court, and thither we are to direct to him, Our Father which art in heaven, yet his kingdom ruleth over all. He takes cognizance of all the inhabitants, and all the affairs of this lower world, and disposeth all persons and things according to the counsel of his will to his own glory, Dan. iv. 35. His kingdom ruleth over all kings, and all kingdoms, and from it there is no exempt jurisdiction.

2. The duty of universal praise inferred from it: if all are under God's dominion, all must do him homage.

(1.) Let the holy angels praise him, *ver. 20, 21.* Bless the Lord, ye his angels; and again, Bless the Lord, all ye his hosts, ye ministers of his. David had been stirring up himself and others to praise God, and here, in the close, he calls upon the angels to do it: not as if they needed any excitement of ours to praise God, they do it continually; but thus he expresses his high thoughts of God, as worthy of the adorations of the holy angels; thus he quickens himself and others to the duty with this consideration, that it is the work of angels; and comforts himself in reference to his own weakness and defect in the performance of this duty, that there is a world of holy angels, who dwell in God's house, and are still praising him. In short, the blessed angels are glorious attendants upon the blessed God. Observe, 1. How well qualified they are for the post they are in. They are able; for they excel in strength; they are mighty in strength, so the word is: they are able to bring great things to pass, and to abide in their work without weariness. And they are as willing as they are able: they are willing to know their work; for they hearken to the voice of his word; they stand expecting commission and instructions from their great Lord, and always behold his face, Matt. xviii. 10. that they may take the first intimation of his mind. They are willing to do their work, they do his commandments, *ver. 20.* they do his pleasure, *ver. 21.* they dispute not any divine commands, but readily address themselves to the execution of them: nor do they delay; but fly swiftly. They do his commandments at hearing; or, as soon as they hear the voice of his word; so Dr. Hammond. To obey is better than sacrifice; for angels obey, but do not sacrifice. 2. What their service is; they are his angels, and ministers of his; his, for he made them, and made them for himself; his, for he useth them, though he doth not need them: his, for he is their Owner and Lord, they belong to him, and he has them at his beck. All the creatures are his servants, but not as the angels that attend the presence of his glory. Soldiers and seamen, and all good subjects, serve the king, but not as the courtiers do, the ministers of state, and those of the household. (1.) The angels occasionally serve God in this lower world; they do his commandments, go on his errands, Dan. ix. 21. fight his battles, 2 Kings vi. 17. and minister for the good of his people, Heb. i. 14. (2.) They continually praise him in the upper world; they begin betimes to do it, Job xxxviii. 7. and it is still their business, from which they rest not day or night, Rev. iv. 8. It is God's glory that he hath such attendants, but more his glory that he neither needs them, nor is benefited by them.

(2.) Let all his works praise him, *ver. 22.* all, in all places of his dominion; for, because they are his works, they are under his dominion; and they were made, and are ruled, that they may be unto him for a name and a praise. All his works, i. e. all the children of men, in all parts of the world, let them all praise God; yea, and the inferior creatures too, which are God's works too, let them praise him objectively, though they cannot actually do it, Psalm cxlv. 10. yet all this shall not excuse David from doing it, but rather excite him to do it the more cheerfully, that he may bear a part in this consort; for he concludes, Bless the Lord, O my soul, as he began, *ver. 1.* Blessing God, and giving him glory, must be the alpha and the omega of all our services. He begun with Bless the Lord, O my soul; and when he had penned and sung this excellent hymn to his honour, he doth not say, Now, O my soul, thou hast blessed the Lord, sit down and rest thee, but Bless the Lord, O my soul, yet more and more. When we have done never so much in the service of God, yet still we must stir up ourselves to do more: God's praise is a subject that will never be exhausted, and therefore we must never think this work done till we come to heaven, where it will be for ever in the doing.

P S A L M CIV.

It is very probable that this psalm was penned by the same hand, and at the same time with the former; for as that ended, this begins, with Bless the Lord, O my soul, and concludes with it too, ver. 35. The stile indeed is somewhat different, because the matter is so; the scope of the foregoing psalm was to celebrate the goodness of God, and his tender mercy and compassion, to which a soft and sweet stile was most agreeable: the scope of this is to celebrate his greatness and majesty, and sovereign dominion, which ought to be done in the most stately lofty strains of poetry. David, in the former psalm, gave God the glory of his covenant-mercy and love to his people, in this he gives him the glory of his works of creation and providence, his dominion over, and his bounty to, all the creatures. God is there praised as the God of grace, here as the God of nature. And this psalm is wholly bestowed on that subject; not as Psalm xix. which begins with it, but passeth from it to the consideration of the divine law; nor as Psalm viii. which speaks of this but prophetically, and with an eye to Christ. This noble poem is thought by very competent judges, not only for piety and devotion, (that is past dispute) but for flight of fancy, brightness of ideas, surprizing turns, and all the beauties and ornaments of expression, far to excel any of the Greek or Latin poets upon any subject of this nature. Many great things the psalmist here gives God the glory of; 1. The splendor of his majesty in the upper world, ver. 1.—4. 2. The creation of the sea, and the dry land, ver. 5.—9. 3. The provision he makes for the maintenance of all the creatures according to their nature, ver. 10.—18. and again, ver. 27, 28. 4. The regular course of the sun and moon, ver. 19.—24. 5. The furniture of the sea, ver. 25, 26. 6. God's sovereign power over all the creatures, ver. 29.—32. And lastly, he concludes with a pleasant and firm resolution to continue praising God, ver. 33.—35. With which we should heartily join in singing this psalm.

1. **B**less the LORD, O my soul: O LORD my God, thou art very great, thou art clothed with honour and majesty. 2. Who coverest thy self with light, as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain. 3. Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters, who maketh the clouds his chariot, who walketh upon the wings of the wind. 4. Who maketh his angels spirits: his ministers a flaming fire. 5. Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever. 6. Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains. 7. At thy rebuke they fled: at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away. 8. They go up by the mountains: they go down by the vallies unto the place which thou hast founded for them. 9. Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over: that they turn not again to cover the earth.

When we are addressing our selves to any religious service, we must stir up our selves to take hold on God in it, Isa. lxiv. 7. so David doth here. Come, my soul, where art thou? what art thou thinking of? here is work to be done, good work, angels work; set about it in good earnest, let all thy powers and faculties be engaged and employed in it: Bless the Lord, O my soul, Jer. xxx. 20.

In these verses,

1. The psalmist looks up to the divine glory shining in the upper world, which though it is one of the things not seen, yet faith is the evidence of it. With what reverence and holy awe doth he begin his meditation with that acknowledgment! O Lord my God, thou art very great, and it is the joy of the saints that he that is their God is a great God: the grandeur of the prince is the pride and pleasure of all his good subjects. The majesty of God is here set forth by divers instances, alluding to the figure which great princes in their publick appearances covet to make; their equipage compared with his (even of the eastern kings, who most affected pomp) is but as the light of a glow-worm compared with that of the sun, when he goes forth in his strength. Princes appear great,

(1.) In their robes: And what are God's robes? Thou art clothed with honour and majesty, ver. 1. God is seen in his works, and those speak him infinitely wise and good, and all that is great. Thou coverest thy self with light, as with a garment, ver. 2. God is light, 1 John i. 5. the Father of lights, Jam. i. 17. he dwells in light, 1 Tim. vi. 16. he clothes himself with it. The residence of his glory is in the highest heaven, that light which was created the first day, Gen. i. 3. Of all visible beings light comes nearest to the nature of a spirit, and therefore with that God is pleased to cover himself, i. e. to reveal himself under that similitude, as men are seen in the clothes with which they cover themselves; and so only, for his face cannot be seen.

(2.) In their palaces, or pavilions, when they take the field: And what is God's palace, and his pavilion? He stretcheth out the heavens like a curtain, ver. 2. so he did at first, when he made

the firmament, which in the Hebrew has its name from its being expanded or stretched out, Gen. i. 7. He made it to divide the waters as a curtain divides between two apartments: so he doth still, he now stretcheth out the heavens like a curtain, i. e. keeps them upon the stretch, and they continue to this day according to his ordinance. The regions of the air are stretched out about the earth, like a curtain about a bed, to keep it warm, and drawn between us and the upper world to break its dazzling light; for though God covers himself with light, yet, in compassion to us, he makes darkness his pavilion; thick clouds are a covering to him. The vastness of this pavilion may lead us to consider how great, how very great, he is that fills heaven and earth. He hath his chambers, his upper rooms, so the word signifies, the beams whereof he lays in the waters, the waters that are above the firmament, ver. 3. as he has founded the earth upon the seas and floods, the waters beneath the firmament. Though air and water are fluid bodies, yet, by the divine power, they are kept as tight and as firm, in the place assigned them, as a chamber is with beams and rafters. How great a God is he, whose presence-chamber is thus reared, thus fixed!

(3.) In their coaches of state, and their stately horses, which add much to the magnificence of their entries: but God makes the clouds his chariots, in which he rides strongly, swiftly, and far above out of the reach of opposition, when at any time he will act by uncommon providences in the government of this world. He descended in a cloud, as in a chariot, to mount Sinai, to give the law, and to mount Tabor, to proclaim the gospel, Matt. xvii. 5. and he walks (a softly pace indeed, yet stately) upon the wings of the wind. See Psalm xviii. 10, 11. He commands the winds, directs them as he pleaseth, and serves his own purposes by them.

(4.) In their retinue, or train of attendants: And here also God is very great; for, ver. 4. he maketh his angels spirits. This is quoted by the apostle, Heb. i. 7. to prove the preeminence of Christ above the angels. The angels are here said to be his angels, and his ministers, for they are under his dominion, and at his dispose; they are winds, and a flame of fire, i. e. they appeared in wind and fire, so some: or, they are swift as winds, and pure as flames; or, he maketh them spirits, so the apostle quotes it. They are spiritual beings; and whatever vehicles they may have proper to their nature, it is certain they have not bodies as we have. Being spirits, they are so much the further removed from the incumbrances of the human nature, and so much the nearer allied to the glories of the divine nature. And they are bright and quick, and ascending as fire, as a flame of fire. In Ezekiel's vision they ran and returned like a flash of lightning, Ezek. i. 14. Thence they are called Seraphim, burners. Whatever they are, they are what God made them, what he still makes them; they derive their being from him, having the being he gave them, are held in being by him, and he makes what use he pleaseth of them.

2. He looks down, and looks about, to the power of God shining in this lower world. He is not so taken up with the glories of his court, as to neglect even the remotest of his territories; no, not the sea and dry land.

(1.) He hath founded the earth, ver. 5. though he has hung it upon nothing, Job xxvi. 2. (*ponderibus librata suis*) yet it is as immoveable as if it had been laid upon the surest foundations. He hath built the earth upon her basis, so that though it has received a dangerous shock by the sin of man, and the malice of hell strikes at it, yet it shall not be removed for ever, i. e. not till the end of time, when it must give way to the new earth. Dr. Hammond's paraphrase of this is worth noting. "God has fixed so strange a place for the earth, that, being a heavy body, one would think it should fall every minute; and yet, which way soever we would imagine it to stir, it must, contrary to the nature of such a body, fall upwards, and so can have no possible ruin but by tumbling into heaven."

(2.) He hath set bounds to the sea; for that also is his.

1. He brought it within bounds in the creation.—At first the earth (which being the more ponderous body, would subside of course) was covered with the deep, ver. 6. the waters were above the mountains, and so it was unfit to be, as it was designed, an habitation for man; and therefore, on the third day, God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered unto one place, and let the dry land appear, Gen. i. 9. This command of God is here called his rebuke, as if he gave it because he was displeased that the earth was thus covered with water, and not fit for man to dwell on. Power went along with this word, and therefore it is also called here the voice of his thunder, which is a mighty voice, and produceth strange effects, ver. 7. At thy rebuke, as if they were made sensible that they were out of their place, they fled, they hasted away; they called, and not in vain, to the rocks and mountains to cover them: as it is said, on another occasion, Psalm lxxvii. 16. The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee, they were afraid. Even those fluid bodies received the impression of God's terror. But was the Lord displeased against the rivers? No, it was for the salvation of his people, Hab. iii. 8, 13. So here God rebuked the waters for man's sake, to prepare room for him; for men must not be made as the fishes of the sea, Hab. i. 14. they must have air to breathe in. Immediately therefore, with all speed, the waters retired, ver. 8. They go over hill and dale (as we say) go up by the mountains, and down by the vallies; they will neither stop at the

former, nor lodge in the latter, but make the best of their way to the place which thou hast founded for them, and there they make their bed. Let the obsequiousness even of the unstable waters teach us obedience to the word and will of God; for shall man alone of all the creatures be obstinate? Let their retiring to, and resting in the place assigned them, teach us to acquiesce in the disposals of that wise providence which appointeth us the bounds of our habitation.

2. He keeps it within bounds, *ver. 9.* The waters are forbidden to pass over the limits set them, they may not, and therefore they do not, *turn again to cover the earth.* Once they did, in Noah's flood, because God bid them, but never since, because he forbids them, having promised not to drown the world again. God himself glories in this instance of his power, *Job xxxviii. 8, &c.* and useth it as an argument with us to fear him, *Jer. v. 22.* This, if duly considered, would keep the world in awe of the Lord and his goodness, that the waters of the sea would soon cover the earth, if God did not restrain them.

10. He sendeth the springs into the vallies, which run among the hills. 11. They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst. 12. By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches. 13. He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. 14. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle; and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth: 15. And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengthneth man's heart. 16. The trees of the LORD are full of sap: the cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted. 17. Where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir-trees are her house. 18. The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats, and the rocks for the conies.

Having given glory to God, as the powerful protector of this earth, in saving it from being deluged, here he comes to acknowledge him as its bountiful benefactor, who provides conveniences for all the creatures.

1. He provides fresh water for their drink; *He sendeth the springs into the vallies, ver. 10.* There is water enough indeed in the sea, that is, enough to drown us, but not one drop to refresh us, be we never so thirsty, it is all so salt; and therefore God has graciously provided water fit to drink. Naturalists dispute about the origin of fountains; but whatever are their second causes, here is their first cause; it is God that sends the springs into the brooks, which walk by easy steps between the hills, and receive increase from the rain-water that descends from them. These give drink, not only to man, and those creatures that are immediately useful to him, but to every beast of the field, *ver. 11.* for where God has given life, he provides a livelihood, and takes care of all the creatures; even the wild asses, though untameable, and therefore of no use to man, yet are welcome to quench their thirst; and we have no reason to grudge it them, for we are better provided for, though born like the wild ass's colt. We have reason to thank God for the plenty of fair weather with which he has provided the habitable part of his earth, which otherwise would not be habitable. That ought to be reckoned a great mercy, the want of which would be a great affliction; and the more common it is, the greater mercy it is; *Ufus communis aquarum.*

2. He provides food convenient for them, both for man and beast; the heavens drop fatness; they bear the earth, but God hears them, *Hos. ii. 21.* He waters the hills from his chambers, *ver. 13.* from those chambers spoken of, *ver. 3.* the beams of which he lays in the waters, those store-chambers, the clouds that distil the fruitful showers. The hills that are not watered by the rivers, as Egypt was by Nile, are watered by the rain from heaven, which is called the river of God, *Psal. lxxv. 9.* as Canaan was, *Deut. xi. 11, 12.* Thus the earth is satisfied with the fruit of his works; either with the rain it drinks in; the earth knows when it has enough, it is pity that any men should not; or with the products it brings forth. It is a satisfaction to the earth to bear the fruit of God's works for the benefit of man, for thus it answers the end of its creation. The food which God brings forth out of the earth, *ver. 14.* is the fruit of his works, which the earth is satisfied with. Observe how various and how valuable its products are; for the cattle there is grass, and the beasts of prey that live not on grass, feed on those that do. For man there is herb, a better sort of grass, (and a dinner of herbs and roots is not to be despised) nay, he is furnished with wine and oil, and bread, *ver. 15.*

We may observe here concerning our food, that which will help to make us both humble and thankful. 1. To make us humble, let us consider that we have a necessary dependence upon God for all the supports of this life; we live upon alms, we are at his finding, for our own hands are not sufficient for us: that our food comes all out of the earth, to mind us whence we our selves were

taken, and whither we must return; and that therefore we must not think to live by bread alone, for that will feed the body only; but must look into the word of God for the meat that endures to eternal life. It is also humbling to consider, that we are upon the matter, fellow-commoners with the beasts; the same earth, the same spot of ground, that brings grass for the cattle, brings corn for man. 2. To make us thankful, let us consider, (1.) That God not only provides for us, but for our servants; the cattle that are of use to man, are particularly taken care of; grass is made to grow in great abundance for them, when the young lions, that are not for the service of man, often lack, and suffer hunger. (2.) That our food is nigh us, and ready to us: having our habitation on the earth, there we have our storehouse, and depend not on the merchant-ships that bring food from afar, *Prov. xxxi. 14.* (3.) That we have even from the products of the earth, not only for necessity, but for ornament and delight; so good a master do we serve. 1. Doth nature call for something to support it, and repair its daily decays? Here is bread, which strengthneth man's heart, and is therefore called the staff of life; let none that have that complaint of want. 2. Doth nature go further, and covet something pleasant? Here is wine that makes glad the heart, refresheth the spirits, and exhilarates them, when it is soberly and moderately used; that we may not only go through our business, but go through it cheerfully: it is pity that should be abused to over-charge the heart, and disfit men for their duty, which was given to revive their heart, and quicken them in their duty. 3. Is nature yet more humourous, and doth it crave something for ornament to? Here is that also out of the earth; oil to make the face to shine, that the countenance may not only be cheerful but beautiful, and we may be the more acceptable to one another.

Nay, the divine providence not only furnisheth animals with their proper food, but vegetables also with theirs, *ver. 16.* The trees of the Lord are full of sap; not only mens trees, which they take care of, and have an eye to, in their orchards and parks, and other inclosures; but God's trees, which grow in the wildernesses, and are taken care of only by his providence, yet they are full of sap, and want no nourishment; even the cedars of Lebanon, an open forest, though they are high and bulky, and require a great deal of sap to feed them, have enough from the earth; they are trees which he hath planted, and which therefore he will protect and provide for. We may apply this to the trees of righteousness, which are the planting of the Lord, planted in his vineyard; these are full of sap; for what God plants he will water; and they that are planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God, *Psal. xcii. 13.*

3. He takes care that they shall have suitable habitations to dwell in. To men God has given discretion to build for themselves, and for the cattle that are serviceable to them: but there are some creatures which God more immediately provides a settlement for.

(1.) The birds.—Some birds by instinct make their nests in the bushes near rivers, *ver. 12.* By the springs that run among the hills, some of the fowls of heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches. They sing, according to their capacity, to the honour of their Creator and Benefactor; and their singing may shame our silence. Our heavenly Father feedeth them, *Matt. vi. 26.* and therefore they are easy and cheerful, and take no thought for the morrow. The birds being made to fly above the earth, as we find *Gen. i. 20.* they make their nests on high in the tops of trees, *ver. 17.* and, it should seem, as if nature had an eye to this in planting the cedars of Lebanon, that they might be receptacles for the birds. Those that fly heaven-ward shall not want resting-places: The stork is particularly instanced in the fir-trees, which are very high, are her house, her castle.

(2.) The lesser sort of beasts.—*ver. 18.* The wild goats, having neither strength nor swiftness to secure themselves, are guided by instinct to the high hills, which are a refuge to them; and the rabbits, which are also helpless animals, find a shelter in the rocks, where they can set the beasts of prey at defiance. Doth God provide thus for the inferior creatures, and will he not himself be a refuge and dwelling-place to his own people?

19. He appointeth the moon for seasons; the sun knoweth his going down. 20. Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. 21. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. 22. The sun riseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. 23. Man goeth forth to his work, and to his labour until the evening. 24. O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches. 25. So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. 26. There go the ships; there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein. 27. These wait all upon thee: that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. 28. That thou givest them, they gather: thou openest thine hand,

hand, they are filled with good. 29. Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled; thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. 30. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.

We are here taught to praise and magnify God,

1. For the constant revolutions and succession of day and night, and the dominion of sun and moon over them. The heathen were so affected with the light and influence of the sun and moon, and their serviceableness to the earth, that they worshipped them as deities; and therefore the scripture takes all occasions, to shew that the gods they worshipped, are the creatures and servants of the true God, *ver. 19. He appointed the moon for seasons*, for the measuring of the months, the directing of the seasons for the business of the husbandman, and the governing of the tides. The full and change, the increase and decrease of the moon, exactly observe the appointment of the Creator; so doth the sun, for he keeps as punctually to the time and place of his going down, as if he were an intellectual being, and knew what he did.

God herein consults the comfort of man.

(1.) The shadows of the evening befriend the repose of the night, *ver. 20. Thou makest darkness, and it is night*, which, though black, contributes to the beauty of nature, and is as a foil to the light of the day; and under the protection of the night *all the beasts of the forest creep forth* to feed, which they are afraid to do in the day, God having put the fear and dread of man upon every beast of the earth, *Gen. ix. 2.* which contributes as much to man's safety as to his honour. See how nearly allied they are to the disposition of the wild beasts, that *wait for the twilight*, *Job xxiv. 15.* and have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; and compare to this, the danger of ignorance and melancholy, which are both as darkness to the soul; when either of those ways *it is night*, then *all the beasts of the forest creep forth*, Satan's temptations then assault us, and have advantage against us. Then the *young lions roar after their prey*; and, as naturalists tell us, their roaring terrifies the timorous beasts, so that they have not strength or spirit to outrun them, which otherwise they might do, and so they become an easy prey to them. They are said to *seek their meat from God*, because it is not prepared for them by the care and forecast of man, but more immediately by the providence of God. The *roaring of the young lions*, like the *crying of the ravens*, is interpreted, *asking their meat of God*. Doth God put this construction upon the language of meer nature, even in venomous creatures, and shall he not much more interpret favourably the language of grace in his own people, though it *be weak and broken groanings which cannot be uttered*?

(2.) The light of the morning befriends the business of the day, *ver. 22, 23. The sun ariseth*, (for as he *knows his going down*, so, thanks be to God, he knows his rising again) and then the wild beasts betake themselves to their rest, even they have some society among them, for they *gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens*, which is a great mercy to the children of men, that while they are abroad, as becomes honest travellers between sun and sun, care is taken that they shall not be set upon by wild beasts, for they are then drawn out of the field, and the sluggard shall have no where to excuse himself from the business of the day, with this, that there is *a lion in the way*. Therefore, then *man goes forth to his work and to his labour*; the beasts of prey creep forth with fear, man goes forth with boldness, as one that hath dominion. The beasts creep forth to spoil and do mischief, man goes forth to work and do good. There is the work of every day, which is to be done in its day, which man must apply to every morning, for the lights are set up for us to work by, not to play by; and which he must stick to till evening; it will be time enough to rest when the night comes, in which *no man can work*.

2. For the replenishing of the ocean,—*ver. 25, 26. As the earth is full of God's riches*, well stocked with animals, and those well provided for, so that it is seldom that any creature dies merely for want of food; *so is this great and wide sea*, which seems an useless part of the globe, at least not to answer the room it takes up; yet God has appointed it its place, and made it serviceable to man, both for navigation, there go the ships, in which goods are conveyed to countries vastly distant, speedily, and much cheaper than by land-carriage; and also to be his store-house for fish; God made not the sea in vain, no more than the earth, he *made it to be inhabited*, for *there are things swimming innumerable, both small and great animals*, which serve for man's dainty food. The whole is particularly mentioned in the history of the creation, *Gen. i. 21.* and is here called the Leviathan, as *Job xli. 1.* He is made to *play in the sea*; he hath nothing to do as man hath, that *goes forth to his work*; he hath nothing to fear, as the beasts have, that lie down in their dens; and therefore he plays with the waters: It is pity any of the children of men, that have nobler powers, and were made for nobler purposes, should live as if they were sent into the world like Leviathan into the waters, to play therein; spending all their time in pastime. The Leviathan is said to *play in the waters*, because he is so well armed against all assaults, that he sets them at defiance, and *laughs at the shaking of a spear*, *Job xli. 29.*

3. For the seasonable and plentiful provision which is made for all the creatures, *ver. 27, 28.* (1.) God is a bountiful benefactor to them; he *gives them their meat*; he *opens his hand, and they are filled with good*. He sustains the armies both of heaven and earth; even the meanest creatures are not below his cognizance. He is open-handed in the gifts of his bounty, and is a great and good house-keeper that provides for so large a family. (2.) They are patient expectants from him. They all wait upon him, *i. e.* They seek their food according to the natural instinct God has put into them, and in the proper season for it; and affect not any other food, or at any other time than nature has ordained; they do their part for the obtaining of it; what God gives them, they gather, and expect not that providence should put it into their mouths; and what they gather they are satisfied with, they are filled with good; and desire no more than what God sees fit for them, which may shame our murmurings and discontent, and unsatisfiedness with our lot.

4. For the absolute power and sovereign dominion which he has over all the creatures, by which the species of each are still continued, though the individuals of each are daily dying and dropping off. See here, (1.) All the creatures perishing, *ver. 29. Thou hidest thy face*, withdrawest thy supporting power, thy supplying bounty, and they are troubled presently. Every creature hath as necessary a dependence upon God's favours, as every faint is sensible he has, and therefore faith with David, *Psal. xxx. 7. Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled*. God's displeasure against this lower world for the sin of man, is the cause of all that vanity and burthen which the whole creation groans under. *Thou takest away their breath*, which is in thy hand, and then, and not till then, *they die, and return to their dust*, to their first principles. The spirit of the beast that goes downward, is at God's command as well as the spirit of a man which goes upward. The death of cattle was one of the plagues of Egypt, and is particularly taken notice of in the drowning of the world. (2.) All preserved notwithstanding, in a succession, *ver. 30. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created*; the same spirit, *i. e.* the same divine will and power, by which they were all created at first, still preserves the several sorts of creatures in their being, and place, and usefulness; so that, though one generation of them passeth away, another comes, and from time to time they are created; new ones rise up instead of the old ones, and this is a continual creation. Thus *the face of the earth is renewed* from day to day, by the light of the sun, which beautifies it anew every morning; from year to year by the products of it, which enrich it anew every spring, and put quite another face upon it from what it had all winter. The world is as full of creatures as if none died, for the place of those that die is filled up. This (the Jews say) is to be applied to the resurrection, which every spring is an emblem of, when a new world rises out of the ashes of the old one.

In the midst of this discourse, the psalmist breaks out into wonder, at the works of God, *ver. 24. O Lord, how manifold are thy works!* They are numerous, they are various, of many kinds, and many of every kind; and yet *in wisdom hast thou made them all*. When men undertake many works, and of different kinds, commonly some of them are neglected, and not done with due care; but God's works, though many, and of different kinds, yet all are made in wisdom, and with the greatest exactness, there is not the least flaw or defect in them. The works of art, the more closely they are looked upon with the help of microscopes, the more rough they appear; the works of nature through these glasses appear more fine and exact. They are all made in wisdom, for they are all made to answer the end they were designed to serve, the good of the universe, in order to the glory of the universal monarch.

31. The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever: the LORD shall rejoice in his works. 32. He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth; he toucheth the hills, and they smoke. 33. I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise unto my God, while I have my being. 34. My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD. 35. Let the finners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more: blest thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD.

The psalmist concludes this meditation with speaking,

1. Praise to God, which is chiefly intended in the psalm.

(1.) He is to be praised, 1. As a great God, and a God of matchless perfection. *The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever, ver. 31.* It shall endure to the end of time in his works of creation and providence; it shall endure to eternity, in the felicity and adorations of saints and angels. Man's glory is fading, God's glory is everlasting; creatures change, but with the Creator there is no variableness. 2. As a gracious God; *the Lord shall rejoice in his works*: He continues that complacency in the products of his own wisdom and goodness, which he had, when he *saw every thing that he had made, and beheld it was very good, and rested the seventh day.*

day. We often do that, which upon the review we cannot rejoice in, but are displeased at, and wish undone again, blaming our own management. But God always *rejoiceth in his works*, because they are all done in wisdom. We regret our bounty and beneficence, but God never doth; he rejoiceth in the works of his grace, his gifts and callings are *without repentance*. 3. As a God of almighty power, *ver. 32. He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth*, as unable to bear his frowns; trembleth, as Sinai did, *at the presence of the Lord. He toucheth the hills, and they smoke*. The volcano's, or burning mountains, such as Ætna, are emblems of the power of God's wrath fastning upon proud unhumbléd sinners. If an angry look, and touch, hath such effects, what will the weight of his heavy hand do, and the operations of his out-stretched arm! *Who knows the power of his anger? Who then dares set it at defiance? God therefore rejoiceth in his works*, because they are all so observant of him; and he will in like manner *take pleasure in them that fear him, and that tremble at his word*.

(2.) The psalmist will himself be much in praising him, *ver. 33. I will sing unto the Lord, unto my God*, will praise him as Jehovah, the Creator, and as *my God*, a God in covenant with me, and this not now only, but *as long as I live, and while I have my being*. Because we have our life and being from God, and depend upon him for the support and continuance of it, as long as we live, and have our being, we must continue to praise God; and when we have no life, no being on earth, we hope to have a better life, and better being, in a better world; and there to be doing this work in a better manner, and in better company.

2. Joy to himself, *ver. 34. My meditation of him shall be sweet*; it shall be fixed and close, it shall be affecting and influencing, and therefore it shall be sweet. Thoughts of God will then be most pleasing, when they are most powerful. Note, Divine meditation is a very sweet duty to all that are sanctified. *I will be glad in the Lord*, i. e. it shall be a pleasure to me to praise him; I will be glad of all opportunities to set forth his glory; and I will rejoice in the Lord always, and in him only. All my joys shall centre in him, and in him they shall be full.

3. Terror to the wicked, *ver. 35. Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth; and let the wicked be no more*. 1. They that oppose the God of power, and fight against him, will certainly be consumed: none can prosper that harden themselves against the Almighty. 2. They that rebel against the light of such convincing evidence of God's being, and refuse to serve him, whom all the creatures serve, will justly be consumed. They that make that earth to groan under the burthen of their impieties, which God thus fills with his riches, deserve to be consumed out of it, and that it should spue them out. 3. They that heartily desire to praise God themselves, cannot but have an holy indignation at those that blaspheme and dishonour him, and an holy satisfaction in the prospect of their destruction, and the honour that God will get to himself upon them. And even this ought to be the matter of their praise; while *sinners are consumed out of the earth*, let my soul bless the Lord, that I am not cast away with the workers of iniquity, but distinguished from them by the special grace of God. When *the wicked are no more*, I hope to be praising God world without end: and therefore, *Praise ye the Lord*; let all about me join with me in praising God. *Hallelujah*; sing praise to Jehovah. This is the first time that we meet with *hallelujah*; and it comes in here upon occasion of the destruction of the wicked; and the last time we meet with it, it is upon the like occasion, when the New Testament Babylon is consumed, this is the burthen of the song, *Hallelujah*, Rev. xix. 1, 3, 4, 6.

P S A L M CV.

Some of the psalms of praise are very short, others very long, to teach us, that, in our devotions, we should be more observant how our hearts work, than how the time passeth; and neither over-stretch our selves, by coveting to be long, nor over-sint our selves, by coveting to be short; but either the one or the other, as we find in our hearts to pray. This is a long psalm; the general scope is the same with most of the psalms, to set forth the glory of God, but the subject matter is particular. Every time we come to the throne of grace we may, if we please, furnish ourselves out of the Word of God (out of the history of the New Testament, as this out of the history of the Old) with new songs, with fresh thoughts, so copious, so various, so inexhaustible is the subject. In the foregoing psalm we are taught to praise God for his wondrous work of common providence, with reference to the world in general. In this we are directed to praise him for his special favours to his church. We find the eleven first verses of this psalm in the beginning of that psalm which David delivered to Asaph to be used (as it should seem) in the daily service of the sanctuary, when the ark was fixed in the place he had prepared for it; by which it appears, both who penned it, and when, and upon what occasion, it was penned, 1 Chron. xvi. 7, &c. David, by it, designed to instruct his people in the obligations they lay under to adhere faithfully to their holy religion. Here is the preface, *ver. 1,—7. and the history itself, in several articles*. 1. God's covenant with patriarchs, *ver. 8,—11*. 2. His care of them while they were strangers, *ver. 12,—15*.

3. His raising up Joseph to be the shepherd and stone of Israel, *ver. 16,—22*. 4. The increase of Israel in Egypt, and their deliverance out of Egypt, *ver. 23,—38*. 5. The care he took of them in the wilderness, and their settlement in Canaan, *ver. 39,—45*. In singing this we must give to God the glory of his wisdom and power, his goodness and faithfulness, must look upon ourselves as concerned in the affairs of the Old Testament church, both because to it were committed the oracles of God, which are our treasure, and out of it Christ arose, and these things happened to it for examples.

1. **O** Give thanks unto the LORD: call upon his name; make known his deeds among the people.
2. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works.
3. Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD.
4. Seek the LORD, and his strength, seek his face evermore.
5. Remember his marvellous works that he hath done, his wonders and the judgments of his mouth.
6. O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen.
7. He is the LORD our God, his judgments are in all the earth.

Our devotion is here warmly excited; and we are stirred up, that we may stir up ourselves to praise God.

Observe, 1. The duties we are here called to; and they are many; but the tendency of them all, is to give unto God the glory due unto his name. (1.) We must *give thanks to him*, as one, who has always been our bountiful benefactor, and requires only that we give him thanks for his favours; poor returns for rich receivings. (2.) *Call upon his name*; as one whom you depend upon for further favours. Praying for further mercies, is accepted as an acknowledgment of former mercies: *Because he has inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him*. (3.) *Make known his deeds*, *ver. 1.* that others may join with you in praising him. *Talk ye of all his wondrous works*, *ver. 2.* as we talk of things that we are full of, and much affected with, and desire to fill others with. God's wondrous works ought to be the subject of our familiar discourses with our families and friends, and we should talk of them *as we sit in the house, and as we go by the way*, Deut. vi. 7. Not merely for entertainment, but for the exciting of devotion, and the encouraging of our own and others faith and hope in God. Even sacred things may be the matter of common talk, provided it be with due reverence. (4.) Sing psalms to God's honour, as those that rejoice in him, and desire to testify that joy for the encouragement of others, and to transmit it to posterity, as memorable things anciently were handed down by songs, when writing was scarce. (5.) *Glory in his holy name*; let those that are disposed to glory, not boast of their own accomplishments and achievements, but of their acquaintance with God, and their relation to him, *Jer. ix. 23, 24. Praise ye his holy name*, (so some;) but it comes all to one, for in glorying in him, we give glory to him. (6.) *Seek him*; place your happiness in him, and then pursue that happiness in all the ways that he hath appointed. *Seek the Lord and his strength*, i. e. the ark of his strength, seek him in the sanctuary, in the way wherein he has appointed us to seek him. *Seek his strength*, i. e. his grace, the strength of his Spirit to work in you that which is good, which we cannot do but by strength derived from him, for which he will be enquired of. *Seek the Lord and be strengthened*; (so divers ancient versions read it.) They that would be *strengthened in the inward man*, must fetch in strength from God by faith and prayer. *Seek his strength*, and then *seek his face*; for by his strength we hope to prevail with him for his favour, as Jacob did, *Hof. xii. 3. Seek his face evermore*, i. e. Seek to have his favour to eternity, and therefore continue seeking it to the end of the time of your probation. Seek it while you live in this world, and you shall have it while you live in the other world, and even there shall be for ever seeking it, in an infinite progression, and yet be for ever satisfied in it. (7.) *Let the hearts of those rejoice that do seek him*, *ver. 3.* for they have chosen well, are well fixed, and well employed, and they may be sure their labour will not be in vain; for he will not only be found, but he will be found the rewarder of those that diligently seek him. And if those have reason to rejoice that *seek the Lord*, much more those that have found him.

2. Some judgments to quicken us to these duties.

1. Consider both what he hath said, and what he hath done to engage us for ever to him; you will see yourselves under all possible obligations to give thanks to him, and call upon his name, if you remember the wonders, which should make deep and durable impressions upon you; the wonders of his providence, which he hath wrought for you, and those that are gone before you, the *marvellous works that he has done*, which will be had in everlasting remembrance with the thoughtful, and with the grateful; the wonders of his law, which he has written to you, and intrusted you with; the judgments of his mouth, as well as the judgments of his hand, *ver. 5*.

2. Consider the relation you stand in to him, *ver. 6. Ye are the seed of Abraham his servant*; you are born in his house, and being

being thereby intitled to the privilege of his servants, protection and provision, you are also bound to do the duty of servants, to attend your Master; consult his honour, obey his commands; and do what you can to advance his interests. You are *the children of Jacob his chosen*, and are *chosen* and *beloved* for the fathers sake, and therefore ought to tread in the steps of those whose honours you inherit. You are the children of godly parents, do not degenerate; you are God's church upon earth, and if you do not praise him, who should?

3. Consider your interest in him; *He is the Lord our God*, ver. 7. We depend upon him, are devoted to him, and from him our expectation is. Should not a people seek unto their God, *Isa. viii. 19.* and praise their God, *Dan. v. 4.* He is *Jehovah, our God*, he that is our God is self-existent; and self-sufficient, hath an irresistible power, and uncontested sovereignty, *His judgments are in all the earth*, he governs the whole world in wisdom, and gives law to all nations, even those that know him not. The earth is full of the proofs of his power.

8. He hath remembered his covenant for ever; the word which he commanded to a thousand generations. 9. Which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac: 10. And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant: 11. Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan; the lot of your inheritance. 12. When they were but a few men in number: yea, very few, and strangers in it. 13. When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people. 14. He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproveth kings for their sakes: 15. Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm. 16. Moreover, he called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread. 17. He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant. 18. Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron. 19. Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him. 20. The king sent and loosed him: even the ruler of the people, and let him go free. 21. He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance: 22. To bind his princes at his pleasure: and teach his senators wisdom. 23. Israel also came into Egypt: and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. 24. And he increased his people greatly: and made them stronger than their enemies.

We are here taught in praising God, to look a great way back, and to give him the glory of what he did for his church in former ages, especially when it was in the founding and forming, which those in its latter ages enjoy the benefit of, and therefore should give thanks for. Doubtless, we may fetch as proper matter for praise from the histories of the gospels, and the acts of the apostles, which relate the birth of the Christian church, as the psalmist here doth from the histories of Genesis and Exodus, which relate the birth of the Jewish church, and our histories quite out-shine theirs.

Two things are here made the subject of praise:

1. God's promise to the patriarchs, that great promise that he would give to their seed the land of Canaan for an inheritance, which was a type of the promise of eternal life made in Christ to all believers. In all the marvellous works which God did for Israel, he remembered his covenant, ver. 8. and he will remember it for ever; it is the word which he commanded to a thousand generations. See here the power of the promise, it is the word which he commanded, and which will take effect; see the perpetuity of the promise, it is commanded to a thousand generations, and the entail of it shall not be cut off. In the parallel place it is expressed as our duty, 1 Chron. xvi. 15. *Be ye mindful always of his covenant.* God will not forget it, and therefore we must not. The promise is here called a covenant, because there was something required on man's part, as the condition of the promise. Observe, (1.) The persons with whom this covenant was made, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, grandfather, father, and son, all eminent believers, *Heb. xi. 8, 9.* (2.) The ratifications of the covenant; it was made sure by all that is sacred. Is that sure which is sworn to? It is his oath to Isaac, and to Abraham. See to whom God swore by himself; *Heb. vi. 13, 14.* Is that sure which is passed into a law? He confirmed the same for a law, a law never to be repealed. Is that sure which is reduced to a mutual contract and stipulation? This is confirmed for an everlasting covenant, inviolable. (3.) The covenant itself; *Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan*, ver. 11. The patriarchs had a right to it, not by providence but promise; and their seed should be put in possession of it, not by the common ways of settling nations, but by miracles; God will give it them himself, as it were with his own hand; it shall be given them as their lot, which God assigns them, and measures out to them, as the lot of their inheritance, a sure title, by virtue of their

birth; it shall come to them by descent, not by purchase; by the favour of God, and not any merit of their own. Heaven is the inheritance we have obtained, *Eph. i. 11.* And this is the promise which God has promised us, (as Canaan was the promise he promised them) even eternal life, 1 John ii. 25. Tit. i. 2.

2. His providences concerning the patriarchs; while they were waiting for the accomplishment of this promise; which represent to us the care God takes of his people in this world, while they are yet on this side the heavenly Canaan; for these things happened unto them for examples, and encouragement to all the heirs of promises, that live by faith as they did.

1. They were wonderfully protected and sheltered, and (as the Jewish masters express it) gathered under the wings of the Divine Majesty. This is accounted for here, ver. 12, 13, 14, 15. Where we may observe,

(1.) How they were exposed to injuries from men; To the three renowned patriarchs Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, God's promises were very rich; again and again, he told them he would be their God; but his performances in this world were so little proportionable, that if he had not prepared for them a city in the other world, he would have been ashamed to have been called their God, see *Heb. xi. 16.* because he was always generous; and yet even in this world he was not wanting to them, but that he might appear to do uncommon things for them he exercised them with uncommon trials. 1. They were few, very few; Abraham was called alone, *Isa. lii. 2.* he had but two sons, and one of them he cast out; Isaac had but two, and one of them was forced for many years to run his country; Jacob had more, but some of them, instead of being a defence to him, exposed him, when (as he himself pleads, *Gen. xxxiv. 30.*) he was but few in number; and therefore might easily be destroyed by the natives; he and his house. God's chosen are but a little flock, few, very few, and yet upheld. 2. They were strangers, and therefore were the more likely to be abused, and to meet with strange usages, and the less able to help themselves. Their religion made them to be looked upon as strangers, 1 Pet. iv. 4. and to be hooted at as speckled birds, *Jer. xii. 9.* Though the whole land was theirs by promise, yet they were so far from producing and pleading their grant, that they confessed themselves strangers in it, *Heb. xi. 13.* 3. They were unsettled, ver. 13. They went from one nation to another, from one part of that land to another (for it was then in the holding and occupation of divers nations) *Gen. xii. 8. xiii. 3. 18.* Nay, from one kingdom to another people; from Canaan to Egypt, from Egypt to the land of the Philistines, which could not but weaken and expose them; yet they were forced to it by famine. Note, Though frequent flitting is neither desirable nor commendable, yet sometimes there is a just and necessary occasion for it, and it may be the lot of some of the best men.

(2.) How they were guarded by the special providence of God, the wisdom and power of which was the more magnified, by their being so many ways exposed, ver. 14, 15. They were not able to help themselves, and yet, 1. No men were suffered to wrong them, but even those that hated them and would gladly have done them a mischief, had their hands tied, and could not do what they would. This may refer to *Gen. xxxv. 5.* where we find that the terror of God (an unaccountable restraint) was upon the cities that were round about them, so that (though provoked) they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob. 2. Even crowned heads that did offer to wrong them, were not only checked and chidden for it, but controlled and baffled; he reproveth kings for their sakes in dreams and visions, saying, touch not mine anointed, it is at your peril if you do; nay, it shall not be in your power to do it, do my prophets no harm. Pharaoh, king of Egypt was plagued, *Gen. xii. 17.* and Abimelech, king of Gerar, was sharply rebuked, *Gen. xx. 6.* for doing wrong to Abraham. Note, 1. Even kings themselves are liable to God's rebukes if they do wrong. 2. God's prophets are his anointed, for they have the unction of the Spirit, that oil of gladness, 1 John ii. 27. 3. They that offer to touch God's prophets with design to harm them, may expect to hear of it one way or other. God is jealous for his prophets, whoso toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye. 4. Even they that touch the prophets, nay, that kill the prophets (as many did) yet cannot do them any harm, any real harm. 5. God's anointed prophets are dearer to him than anointed kings themselves. Jeroboam's hand was withered when it was stretched out against a prophet.

2. They were wonderfully provided for and supplied: And here also (1.) They were reduced to great extremity, even in Canaan, the land of promise, he called for a famine, ver. 16. Note, All judgments are at God's call, and no place is exempt from their visitation and jurisdiction, when God sends them forth with commission. To try the faith of the patriarchs, God brake the whole staff of bread, even in that good land, that they might plainly see God designed them a better country than that was. (2.) God graciously took care for their relief. It was in obedience to his precept, and in dependence upon his promise, that they were now sojourners in Canaan, and therefore he could not in honour suffer any evil thing to befall them, or any good thing to be wanting to them. As he restrained one Pharaoh from doing them wrong, so he raised up another to do them a kindness, by preferring and entrusting Joseph, of whose story we have here an abstract. He

was to be the shepherd and stone of Israel, and to save that holy seed alive, Gen. xlix. 24. 1. 20. In order to this,

1. He was humbled, greatly humbled, *ver. 17, 18. God sent a man before them, even Joseph*, many years before the famine began, he was sent before them that was to nourish them in the famine; so vast are the foresights and forecasts of providence, and so long its reaches; but in what character did he go to Egypt, who was to provide for the reception of the church there? He went not in quality of an ambassador, no, nor so much as a factor or commissary; but *he was sold thither for a servant*, a slave for term of life, without any prospect of being ever set at liberty. This was low enough, and, one would think, set him far enough from any probability of being great; and yet he was brought lower, he was made a prisoner, *ver. 18. His feet they hurt with fetters*, being unjustly charged with a crime no less heinous than a rape upon his mistress; *the iron entered into his soul*, i. e. was very painful to him; and the false accusation, which was the cause of his imprisonment, did, in a special manner, grieve him, and went to his heart; yet all this was the way to his preferment.

2. He was exalted, highly exalted; he continued a prisoner, neither tried nor bailed, *until the time appointed of God for his release, ver. 19. when his word came*, i. e. his interpretations of dreams came to pass, and the report thereof came to Pharaoh's ears, by the chief butler; and then *the word of the Lord cleared him*, i. e. the power God gave him to foretell things to come, rolled away the reproach his mistress had loaded him with; for it could not be thought God would give such a power to so ill a man as he was represented to be. *God's word tried him*, tried his faith and patience, and then it came in power to give command for his release. There is a time set when God's word will come for the comfort of all that trust in it, *Hab. ii. 3. At the end it shall speak, and not lie*. God gave the word, and then *the king sent and loosed him*; for the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. Pharaoh finding him to be a favourite of heaven, 1. Discharged him from his imprisonment, *ver. 20. he let him go free*. God has often, by wonderful turns of providence, pleaded the cause of oppressed innocence. 2. He advanced him to the highest posts of honour, *ver. 21, 22. He made him lord high chamberlain of his household, (he made him lord of his house;) nay, he put him into the office of lord treasurer, the ruler of all his substance. He made him prime minister of state, lord president of his council, to command his princes at his pleasure, and teach them wisdom: general of his forces; according to thy word shall all my people be ruled, Gen. xli. 40, 43, 44. He made him lord chief justice, to judge even his senators, and punish those that were disobedient. In all this Joseph was designed to be, (1.) A father to the church that then was, to save the house of Israel from perishing by the famine. He was made great that he might do good, especially in the household of faith. (2.) A figure of Christ that was to come; who, because he humbled himself, and took upon him the form of a servant, was highly exalted, and hath all judgment committed to him.*

Joseph being thus sent before, and put into a capacity of maintaining all his father's house, *Israel also came into Egypt, ver. 23. where he, and all his, were very honourably and comfortably provided for many years: Thus the New Testament church has a place provided for her, even in the wilderness, where she is nourished for a time, times, and half a time, Rev. xii. 14. verily she shall be fed.*

3. They were wonderfully multiplied, according to the promise made to Abraham, that his seed should be as the sand of the sea for multitude, *ver. 24. In Egypt he increased his people greatly, they multiplied like fishes, so that in a little time they became stronger than their enemies, and formidable to them. Pharaoh took notice of it, Exod. i. 9. The children of Israel are more and mightier than we; when God pleaseth, a little one shall become a thousand: and God's promises, though they work slowly, yet they work surely.*

25. He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants. 26. He sent Moses his servant, and Aaron whom he had chosen. 27. They shewed his signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham. 28. He sent darkness, and made it dark: and they rebelled not against his word. 29. He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish. 30. Their land brought forth frogs in abundance, in the chambers of their kings. 31. He spake, and there came divers sorts of flies, and lice in all their coasts. 32. He gave them hail for rain: and flaming fire in their land. 33. He smote their vines also and their fig-trees: and brake the trees of their coasts. 34. He spake, and the locusts came: and caterpillars, and that without number, 35. And did eat up all the herbs in their land: and devoured the fruit of their ground. 36. He smote also all the first-born in their land: the chief of all their strength. 37. He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes. 38. Egypt was glad when they departed: for

the fear of them fell upon them. 39. He spread a cloud for a covering: and fire to give light in the night. 40. The people asked, and he brought quails: and satisfied them with the bread of heaven. 41. He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out, they ran in the dry places like a river. 42. For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant. 43. And he brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness: 44. And gave them the lands of the heathen: and they inherited the labour of the people: 45. That they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws. Praise ye the LORD.

After the history of the patriarchs, follows here the history of the people of Israel, when they grew into a nation.

1. Their affliction in Egypt, *ver. 25. He turned the heart of the Egyptians, that had protected them, to hate them, and deal subtilly with them.* God's goodness to his people exasperated the Egyptians against them, and though their old antipathy to the Hebrews (which we read of *Gen. xliii. 32. xlii. 34.*) was laid asleep for a while, yet now it revived with more violence than ever: formerly they hated them because they despised them, now because they feared them. They dealt subtilly with them, set all their politicks on work, to find out ways and means to weaken them, and waste them, and prevent their growth; they made their burthens heavy, and their lives bitter, and slew their male-children as soon as they were born. Malice is crafty to destroy: Satan has the serpent's subtilty, with his venom. It was God that turned the hearts of the Egyptians against them, for every creature is that to us that he makes it to be, a friend or an enemy: Though God is not the author of the sins of men, yet he serves his own purposes by them.

2. Their deliverance out of Egypt, that work of wonder, which that it might never be forgotten, is put into the preface to the ten commandments. Observe,

(1.) The instruments employed in that deliverance, *ver. 26. He sent Moses his servant* on this errand, and joined Aaron in commission with him. Moses was designed to be their lawgiver, and chief magistrate, Aaron to be their chief priest; and therefore, that they might respect them the more, and submit to them the more cheerfully, God made use of them as their deliverers.

(2.) The means of accomplishing that deliverance; and those were the plagues of Egypt. Moses and Aaron observed their orders in summoning them, just as God appointed them, and they rebelled not against his word, *ver. 28. as Jonah did, who, when he was sent to denounce God's judgments against Nineveh, went to Tarshish. Moses and Aaron were not moved, either with a foolish fear of Pharaoh's wrath, or a foolish pity of Egypt's misery, to relax or retard any of the plagues which God ordered them to inflict on the Egyptians; but stretched forth their hand to inflict them as God appointed. They that are instructed to execute judgment, will find their remissness construed a rebellion against God's word. The plagues of Egypt are here called God's signs, and his wonders, ver. 27. they were not only proofs of his power, but tokens of his wrath, and to be looked upon with admiration and holy awe. They shewed the words of his signs, so it is in the original; for every plague had an exposition going along with it; they were not as the common works of creation and providence, silent signs, but speaking ones, and spoke aloud. They are all, or most of them, here instanced in, though not in the order in which they were inflicted.*

1. The plague of darkness, *ver. 28. This was one of the last, though here mentioned first: God sent darkness, and, coming with commission, it came with efficacy; his command made it dark. And then they, i. e. the people of Israel, rebelled not against God's word, viz. a command which some think was given them to circumcise all among them that had not been circumcised; in doing which the three days darkness would be a protection to them. The old Translation follows the Septuagint, and reads it, they were not obedient to his word; which may be applied to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, who, notwithstanding the terror of this plague, would not let the people go; but there is no ground for it in the Hebrew.*

2. The turning of the river Nilus (which they idolized) into blood, and all their other waters, which slew their fish, *ver. 29. and so they were deprived, not only of their drink, but the daintiest of their meat, Numb. xi. 5.*

3. The frogs, shoals of which their land brought forth, which poured in upon them, not only in such numbers, but with such fury, that they could not keep them out of the chambers of their kings, and great men, whose hearts had been full of vermin, more nauseous, and more noxious, contempt of, and enmity to both God and his Israel.

4. Flies of divers sorts swarmed in their air, and lice in their clothes, *ver. 31. Exod. viii. 17, 24. Note, God can make use of the meanest, and weakest, and most despicable animals; for the punishing and humbling of proud oppressors, to whom the impotency of the instrument cannot but be a great mortification, as well as an undeniable conviction of the divine omnipotence.*

5. Hail-stones shattered their trees, even the strongest timber-trees in their coasts, and killed their vines, and other their fruit-trees,

trees, *ver. 32, 33.* Instead of rain to cherish their trees, he gave them hail to crush them, and with it thunder and lightning, to that degree, that the fire *run along upon the ground*, as if it had been a stream of kindled brimstone, *Exod. ix. 23.*

6. *Locusts and caterpillers* destroyed all *the herbs* which were made for the service of man, and eat the bread out of their mouths, *ver. 34, 35.* See what variety of judgments God has wherewith to plague proud oppressors, that will not let his people go. God did not bring the same plague twice, but, when there was occasion for another, it was still a new one; for he has many arrows in his quiver. Locusts and caterpillers are God's armies, and how weak soever they are singly, he can raise such numbers of them as to make them formidable, *Joel i. 4, 6.*

7. Having mentioned all the plagues, but those of the murrain and biles, he concludes with that which gave the conquering stroke, and that was the death of *the first-born*, *ver. 36.* In the dead of the night the joys and hopes of their families, *the chief of their strength*, and flower of their land, were all struck dead by the destroying angel. They would not release God's first-born, and therefore God seized theirs by way of reprisal, and thereby forced them to dismiss his too, when it was too late to retrieve their own; for *when God judgeth he will overcome*, and they will certainly sit down losers at last that contend with him.

(3.) The mercies that accompanied this deliverance. In their bondage, 1. They had been impoverished, and yet they came out rich and wealthy: God not only brought them forth, but he *brought them forth with silver and gold*, *ver. 37.* God impowered them to ask and collect the contributions of their neighbours, which was indeed but part of payment for their service they had done them, and inclined the Egyptians to furnish them with what they asked. Their wealth was his, and therefore he might, their hearts were in his hand, and therefore he could give it to the Israelites. 2. Their lives had been made bitter to them, and their bodies and spirits broken by their bondage, and yet, when God brought them forth, *there was not one feeble person*, none sick, none so much as sickly, *among their tribes*: they went out that very night that the plague swept away all the first-born of Egypt, and yet they came out all in good health, and brought not with them any of the diseases of Egypt. Surely never was the like; that among so many thousands there was not one sick! so false was the representation which the Jews enemies in after-ages gave of this matter, that they were all lick of a leprosy, or some lothsome disease, and therefore the Egyptians thrust them out of their land. 3. They had been trampled upon, and insulted over, and yet they were brought out with honour, *ver. 38.* *Egypt was glad when they departed*; for God had so wonderfully owned them, and pleaded their cause, that *the fear of Israel fell upon them*, and they owned themselves baffled and overcome: God can and will make his church a *burthensome stone* to all that *beave at it*, and seek to displace it, so that they shall think themselves happy that get out of its way, *Zech. xii. 3.* *when God judgeth he will overcome.* 4. They had spent their days in sorrow and sighing, by reason of their bondage, but now he brought them forth *with joy and gladness*, *ver. 43.* when Egypt's cry for grief was loud, their first-born being all slain, Israel's shouts for joy were as loud; both when they looked back upon the land of slavery, out of which they were rescued, and when they looked forward to the pleasant land to which they were hastning. God now put a new song into their mouth.

(4.) The special care God took of them in the wilderness. 1. For their shelter, besides the canopy of heaven, he provided them another heavenly canopy, he *spread a cloud for a covering*, *ver. 39*; which was to them not only a screen and umbrella, but a cloth of state. A cloud was often God's pavilion, *Psal. xviii. 11.* and now it was Israel's; for they also were his hidden ones. 2. For their conduct and refreshment in the dark, he appointed a pillar of fire *to give light in the night*, that they might never be at a loss. Note, God graciously provides against all the grievances of his people, and furnisheth them with convenient succours for every condition, for day and night, till they come there where it will be all day, to eternity. 3. He fed them both with necessaries and dainties. Sometimes he furnished their tables with wild fowl, *ver. 40.* *The people asked, and he brought quails*, and when they were not thus feasted, yet they were abundantly satisfied, *with the bread of heaven*; and those are curious and covetous indeed who will not be so satisfied. Man did eat angels food, and that constantly, and on free-cost. And as every bit they eat had miracle in it, so had every drop they drank: *He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out*, *ver. 41.* Common providence fetcheth waters from heaven, and bread out of the earth; but for Israel the divine power brings bread from the clouds, and water from the rocks: so far is the God of nature from being tied to the laws and courses of nature. The water did not only gush out once, but it *run like a river*, plentifully and constantly, and attended their camp in all their removes; hence they are said to have the *rock follow them*, *1 Cor. x. 4.* and, which increased the miracle, this river of God (so it might be truly called) ran in dry places, and yet was not drunk in and lost, as one would expect it should have been by the sands of the desert of Arabia. To this that promise alludes, *I will give rivers in the desert to give drink to my chosen*, *Isa. xliii. 19, 20.*

(5.) Their entrance at length into Canaan, *ver. 44.* *He gave them the lands of the heathen*; put them in possession of that which they had long been put in hopes of; and what the Canaanites had taken pains for, God's Israel had the enjoyment of; *they inherited the labour of the people*, and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just. The Egyptians had long inherited their labours, and now they inherited the labours of the Canaanites. Thus sometimes one enemy of the church is made to pay another's scores.

(6.) The reasons why God did all this for them,

1. Because he would himself perform the promises of the word, *ver. 42.* They were unworthy and unthankful, yet he did those great things in their favour, *because he remembered the word of his holiness*, (i. e. his covenant) *with Abraham his servant*; and he would not suffer one iota or tittle of that to fall to the ground, See *Deut. vii. 8.*

2. Because he would have them to perform the precepts of the word; to bind them to which, was the greatest kindness he could put upon them. He put them in possession of Canaan, not that they might live in plenty and pleasure, in ease and honour, and might make a figure among the nations, but *that they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws*; that, being formed into a people, they might be under God's immediate government, and revealed religion might be the basis of their national constitution; that, having a good land given them, they might, out of the profits of it, bring sacrifices to God's altar; and that God having thus done them good, they might the more cheerfully receive his law; concluding that also designed for their good; and might be sensible of their obligations in gratitude to live in obedience to him. We are therefore made, maintained and redeemed, that we may live in obedience to the will of God: and the hallelujah with which the psalm concludes, may be taken both as a thankful acknowledgment of God's favours, and as a cheerful concurrence with this great intention of them. Has God done so much for us, and yet doth he expect so little from us? *Praise ye the Lord.*

P S A L M CVI.

We must give glory to God by making confession, not only of his goodness, but our own badness, which serve as foils to each other: our badness makes his goodness appear the more illustrious, as his goodness makes our badness the more heinous and scandalous. The foregoing psalm was a history of God's goodness to Israel: this is a history of their rebellions and provocations, and yet it begins and ends with hallelujah; for even sorrow for sin must not put us out of tune for praising God. Some think it was penned at the time of the captivity in Babylon, and the dispersion of the Jewish nation thereupon, because of that prayer in the close, ver. 47. I rather think it was penned by David, at the same time with the foregoing psalm, because we find the first verse, and the two last, in that psalm which David delivered to Asaph, at the bringing up of the ark to the place he had prepared for it, 1 Chron. xvi. 34, 35, 36. Gather us from among the heathen; for, we may suppose, in Saul's time, there was a great dispersion of pious Israelites, when David was forced to wander. In the psalm we have, 1. The preface to the narrative speaking honour to God, ver. 1, 2. comfort to the saints, ver. 3. and the desire of the faithful towards God's favour, ver. 4, 5. 2. The narrative it self of the sins of Israel, aggravated by the great things God did for them, an account of which is intermixed. Their provocations at the Red sea, ver. 6,—12. Lusting, ver. 13,—15. Mutinying, ver. 16,—18. Worshipping the golden calf, ver. 19,—23. Murmuring, ver. 24,—37. Joining themselves to Baal-peor, ver. 28,—31. Quarrelling with Moses, ver. 32, 33. Incorporating themselves with the nations of Canaan, ver. 34,—39. To which is added an account how God had rebuked them for their sins, and yet saved them from ruin, ver. 40,—46. 3. The conclusion of the psalm with prayer and praise, ver. 47, 48. It may be of use to us to sing this psalm, that, being put in mind by it of our sins, the sins of our land, and the sins of our fathers, we may be humbled before God, and yet not despair of mercy, which even rebellious Israel often found with God.

1. **P**RAISE ye the LORD, O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever. 2. Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? who can shew forth all his praise? 3. Blessed are they that keep judgment: and he that doeth righteousness at all times. 4. Remember me, O LORD, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation: 5. That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation: that I may glory with thine inheritance.

We are here taught,

1. To bless God, *ver. 1, 2.* *Praise ye the Lord*, that is, (1.) Give him thanks for his goodness, the manifestation of it to us, and the many instances of it. *He is good*, and his mercy endureth for ever; let us therefore own our obligations to him, and make him a return of our best affections and services. (2.) Give him the

The glory of his greatness; his *mighty acts*, proofs of his almighty power, wherein he has done great things, and such as would be opposed: *Who can utter these?* Who is worthy to do it? Who is able to do it? They are so many they cannot be numbered, so mysterious they cannot be described; when we have said the most we can of the mighty acts of the Lord, the one half is not told, still there is more to be said; it is a subject that cannot be exhausted. We must *shew forth his praise*; we may shew forth some of it, but *who can shew forth all?* not the angels themselves. This will not excuse us in not doing what we can, but should quicken us to do all we can.

2. To bless the people of God, to call and count them happy, *ver. 3. They that keep judgment are blessed*, for they are fit to be employed in praising God. God's people are they whose principles are sound, *they keep judgment*, they adhere to the rules of wisdom and religion, and their practices are agreeable; they *do righteousness*, are just to God, and to all men; and herein they are steady and constant, they do it *at all times*, in all manner of conversation, at every turn, in every instance, and herein persevering to the end.

3. To bless our selves in the favour of God, to place our happiness in it, and to seek it accordingly with all seriousness; as the psalmist here, *ver. 4, 5. 1. He has an eye to the loving kindness of God, as the fountain of all happiness. Remember me, O Lord, to give me that mercy and grace which I stand in need of, with the favour which thou bearest to thy people.* As there is a people in the world that are in a peculiar manner God's people, so there is a peculiar favour which God bears to that people; which all gracious souls desire an interest in; and we need desire no more to make us happy. 2. He has an eye to the salvation of God, the great salvation, that of the soul, as the foundation of happiness; *O visit me with thy salvation*: "Afford me (saith Dr. Hammond) that pardon, and that grace, which I stand in need of, and can hope for "from none but thee." Let that salvation be my portion for ever, and the pledges of it my present comfort. 3. He has an eye to the blessedness of the righteous, as that which includes all good, *ver. 5. That I may see the good of thy chosen*, and be as happy as thy saints are; and happier I do not desire to be. God's people are here called his chosen, his nation, his inheritance; for he hath set them apart for himself, incorporated them under his own government, is served by them, and glorified in them. This chosen people of God have a good which is peculiar to them, which is the matter both of their gladness, and of their glorying; which is their pleasure, and their prize. God's people have reason to be a cheerful people, and to boast in their God all the day long; and they that have that gladness, that glory, need not envy any of the children of men their pleasure or pride. The gladness of God's nation, and the glory of his inheritance, is enough to satisfy any man; for it has everlasting joy and glory at the end of it.

6. We have sinned with our fathers: we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly. 7. Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt, they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies, but provoked him at the sea, *even at the Red sea*. 8. Nevertheless, he saved them for his names sake: that he might make his mighty power to be known. 9. He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths as through the wilderness. 10. And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them: and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. 11. And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left. 12. Then believed they his words, they sang his praise.

Here begins a penitential confession of sin, which was in a special manner seasonable now the church was in distress; for thus we must justify God in all that he brings upon us, acknowledging that therefore he hath done right, because *we have done wickedly*: and the remembrance of former sins, notwithstanding which God did not cast off his people, is an encouragement to us to hope, that though we are justly corrected for our sins, yet we shall not be utterly abandoned.

1. God's afflicted people here own themselves guilty before God, *ver. 6. We have sinned with our fathers*, i. e. like our fathers, after the similitude of their transgression. We have added to the stock of hereditary guilt, and filled up the measure of our fathers iniquity, to *augment yet the fierce anger of the Lord*, Numb. xxxii. 14. Matt. xxiii. 32. And see how they lay load upon themselves, as becomes penitents; *We have committed iniquity*, that which is in its own nature sinful; and *we have done wickedly*; we have sinned with an high hand presumptuously. Or, this is a confession, not only of their imitation of, but their interest in their fathers sins: *We have sinned with our fathers*, for we were in their loins, and we bear their iniquity, Lam. v. 7.

2. They bewail the sins of their fathers, when they were first formed into a people; which, since children often smart for, they are concerned to sorrow for, even farther than to the third and fourth generation. Even we now ought to take an occasion from

the history of Israel's rebellions, to lament the pravity and perverseness of man's nature, and its unaptness to be amended by the most probable means. Observe here,

(1.) The strange stupidity of Israel in the midst of the favours God bestowed upon them, *ver. 7. They understood not thy wonders in Egypt*. They saw them, but they did not rightly apprehend the meaning and design of them: *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have understood*. They thought the plagues of Egypt were intended for their deliverance, whereas they were intended also for their instruction and conviction, not only to force them out of their Egyptian slavery, but to cure them of their inclination to Egyptian idolatry; by evidencing the sovereign power and dominion of the God of Israel, above all gods, and his particular concern for them. We lose the benefit of providences for want of understanding them. And as their understandings were dull, so their memories were treacherous, though one would think such astonishing events should never have been forgotten, yet they remembered them not, at least *they remembered not the multitude of God's mercies* in them. Therefore God is distrustful, because his favours are not remembered.

(2.) Their perverseness, arising from this stupidity; *They provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea*. The provocation was despair of deliverance, because the danger was great, and wishing they had been left in Egypt still, *Exod. xiv. 11, 12*. Quarrelling with God's providence, and questioning his power, goodness and faithfulness, are as great provocations to him as any whatsoever. The place aggravated the crime; it was *at the sea, at the Red sea*, when they were newly come out of Egypt, and the wonders God had wrought for them were fresh in their minds; yet they reproach him, as if all that power had no mercy in it, but that he brought them out of Egypt on purpose to *kill them in the wilderness*. They never lay at God's mercy so immediately, as in their passage through the Red sea, yet there they affront it, and provoke his wrath.

(3.) The great salvation God wrought for them, notwithstanding their provocations, *ver. 8, 9, 10, 11. 1. He forced a passage for them through the sea; He rebuked the Red sea* for standing in their way, and retarding their march, *and it was dried up* immediately; as in the creation, *at God's rebuke the waters fled*, Psalm civ. 7. Nay, he not only prepared them a way, but, by the pillar of cloud and fire, he *led them into the sea*, and, by the conduct of Moses, led them through it as readily as *through the wilderness*; he encouraged them to take those steps, and subdued their fears, when those were their most dangerous and threatening enemies. See *Isa. lxiii. 12, 13, 14. 2. He interposed between them and their pursuers, and prevented them from cutting them off*, as they designed. The Israelites were all on foot, and the Egyptians had all of them chariots and horses, with which they were likely to overtake them presently, but God *saved them from the hand of him that hated them*, viz. Pharaoh, who never loved them, but now hated them the more for the plagues he had suffered on their account; *from the hand of his enemy*, which was just ready to seize them; *God redeemed them*, *ver. 10. interposing himself as it were in the pillar of fire, between the persecuted and the persecutors. 3. To compleat the mercy, and turn the deliverance into a victory, the Red sea, that was a lane to them, was a grave to the Egyptians, ver. 11. The waters covered their enemies*, so as to slay them, but not so as to conceal their shame; for the next tide they were thrown up dead upon the shore, *Exod. xiv. 30. There was not one of them left alive*, to bring tidings what was become of the rest. And why did God do this for them? Nay, why did he not cover them as he did their enemies, for their unbelief and murmuring? He tells us, *ver. 8. It was for his name's sake*: though they did not deserve this favour, he designed it; and their undeservings should not alter his designs, nor break his measures, or make him withdraw his promise, or fail in the performance of it. He did this for his own glory, *that he might make his mighty power to be known*, not only in dividing the sea, but in doing it notwithstanding their provocations. Moses prays, *Numb. xii. 17, 19. Let the power of my Lord be great, and pardon the iniquity of this people*. The power of the God of grace in pardoning sin, and sparing sinners, is as much to be admired, as the power of the God of nature in dividing the waters.

(4.) The good impression this made upon them for the present, *ver. 12. Then believed they his words*, and acknowledged that God was with them of a truth; and had in mercy to them brought them out of Egypt, and not with any design to slay them in the wilderness; then *they feared the Lord, and his servant Moses*, *Exod. xiv. 31. Then they sang his praise*, in that song of Moses penned on this great occasion, *Exod. xv. 1. See in a what a gracious and merciful way God sometimes silenceth the unbelief of his people, and turns their fears into praises; and so it is written, They that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine*, *Isa. xxix. 24.*

13. They soon forgot his works, they waited not for his counsel: 14. But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. 15. And he gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul. 16. They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the

the faint of the LORD. 17. The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan; and covered the company of Abiram. 18. And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burnt up the wicked. 19. They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image. 20. Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass. 21. They forgot God their saviour, which had done great things in Egypt: 22. Wondrous works in the land of Ham; and terrible things by the Red sea. 23. Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach: to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them. 24. Yea, they despised the pleasant land: they believed not his word: 25. But murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD. 26. Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness: 27. To overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands. 28. They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead. 29. Thus they provoked him to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them. 30. Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed. 31. And that was counted unto him for righteousness, unto all generations for evermore. 32. They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: 33. Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

This is an abridgment of the history of Israel's provocations in the wilderness, and of the wrath of God against them for those provocations: and this abridgment is abridged by the apostle, with application to us Christians, 1 Cor. x. 5, &c. for these things were written for our admonition, that we sin not like them, lest we suffer like them.

1. The cause of their sin was disregard to the works and word of God, ver. 13. (1.) They minded not what he had done for them. *They soon forgot his works*, and lost the impressions they had made upon them. They that do not improve God's mercies to them, nor endeavour, in some measure, to render according to the benefit done unto them, do indeed forget them. This people soon forgot them; God took notice of this, *Exod. xxxii. 8. They have turned aside quickly. They made haste, they forgot his works*, so it is in the margin; which some make to be two several instances of their sin. *They made haste*, i. e. their expectations anticipated God's promises; they expected to be in Canaan presently, and because they were not, they questioned whether they should ever be there, and quarrelled with all the difficulties they met with in their way: whereas *he that believeth doth not make haste*, Isa. xxviii. 16. And withal, *they forgot his works*, which were the undeniable evidences of his wisdom, power and goodness, and denied the conclusion as confidently as if they had never seen the premises proved. This is mentioned again, ver. 21, 22. *They forgot God their saviour*, i. e. they forgot that he had been their saviour: those that forget the works of God, forget God himself, who makes himself known by his works. They forgot what was done but a few days before, which, we may suppose, they could not but talk of, even then, when, because they did not make a good use of it, they are said to forget it: it was what God did for them *in Egypt, in the land of Ham, and by the Red sea*, things which we at this distance cannot or should not be unmindful of. They are called *great things* (for though the great God doth nothing mean, yet he doth some things that are in a special manner great) *wondrous works*, out of the common road of providence, therefore observable, therefore memorable, and *terrible things*, awful to them, and dreadful to their enemies, and yet soon forgotten; even miracles that were seen, passed away with them as tales that are told. (2.) They minded not what God had said to them, nor would they depend upon it, *they waited not for his counsel*, did not attend his word, though they had Moses to be his mouth to them; they took up resolves, about which they did not consult him, and made demands without calling upon him. They would be in Canaan presently, and had not patience to tarry God's time; the delay was intolerable, and therefore the difficulties were looked upon as insuperable. This is explained, ver. 24. *They believed not his word*, his promise that he would make them masters of Canaan; and, ver. 25. *they hearkened not to the voice of the Lord*, who gave them counsel, which they would not wait for, not only by Moses and Aaron, but by Caleb and Joshua, *Numb. xiv. 6, 7, &c.* Those that will not wait for God's counsel, shall justly be given up to their own hearts lusts, to walk in their own counsels.

2. The sins themselves are many of them here mentioned, together with the tokens of God's displeasure, which they fell under for those sins.

1. They would have flesh, and yet would not believe that God could give it them, ver. 14. *They lusted a lust* (so the word is) *in*

the wilderness, there where they had bread enough; and to spare: yet nothing would serve them but they must have flesh to eat. They were now purely at God's finding; so that this was a reflection upon the wisdom and goodness of their Creator. They were now, in all probability; within a step of Canaan, yet had not patience to stay for dainties till they came thither; they had flocks and herds of their own, but they will not kill them; God must give them flesh as he gave them bread, or they will never give him credit, or their good word: they did not only wish for flesh, but they *lusted exceedingly* after it. A desire, even of lawful things, when it is inordinate and violent, becomes sinful; and therefore this is called *lusting after evil things*, 1 Cor. x. 6. though the quails, as God's gift, were good things, and were so spoken of, *Psal. cv. 40.* Yet this was not all; *they tempted God in the desert*, where they had had such experience of his goodness and power, and questioned whether he could and would gratify them herein. See *Psal. lxxviii. 19, 20.*

Now how did God shew his displeasure against them for this? We are told how, ver. 15. *He gave them their request*, but gave it them in anger, and with a curse, for he *sent leanness into their soul*, i. e. he filled them with uneasiness of mind, and terror of conscience, and a self-reproach, occasioned by their bodies being sick with the surfeit, such as sometimes drunkards experience after a great debauch. Or this is put for that great plague with which the Lord smote them, *while the flesh was yet between their teeth*, as we read, *Numb. xi. 33.* it was the consumption of the life. Note, 1. What is asked in passion is often given in wrath. 2. Many that fare deliciously every day, and whose bodies are healthful and fat, yet at the same time have leanness in their souls: no love to God, no thankfulness, no appetite to the bread of life, and then the soul must needs be lean. These wretchedly forget themselves, that scast their bodies, and starve their souls. Then God gives the good things of this life in love, when, with them, he gives grace to glorify him in the use of them; for then *the soul delights it self in fatness*, Isa. lv. 2.

2. They quarrelled with the government which God had set over them, both in church and state, ver. 16. *They envied Moses*, his authority, *in the camp*, as generalissimo of the armies of Israel, and chief justice in all their courts: and they envied Aaron his power, as *saint of the Lord*, consecrated to the office of high priest: and Korah would needs put in for the pontificate, while Dathan and Abiram, as princes of the tribe of Reuben, (Jacob's eldest son) would claim to be chief magistrates, by the so much admired right of primogeniture. Note, They are preparing ruin for themselves, who envy those whom God has put honour upon, and usurp the dignities they were never designed for. And justly will contempt be poured upon them, who put contempt upon any of the saints of the Lord.

And how did God shew his displeasure for this? We are told how, and it is enough to make us tremble, ver. 17, 18. we have the story, *Numb. xvi. 32, 35.* 1. They that flew in the face of the civil authority, were punished by *the earth*, which *opened and swallowed them up*, as not fit to go upon God's ground, because they would not submit to God's government. 2. They that would usurp the ecclesiastical authority, in things pertaining to God, on them heaven took vengeance, for *fire came out from the Lord and consumed them*; and the pretending sacrificers were themselves sacrificed to divine justice: *The flame burnt up the wicked*: for though they vied with Aaron, the saint of the Lord, for holiness, *Numb. xvi. 3, 5.* yet God adjudged them wicked; and, as such, cut them off, as in due time he will destroy the man of sin, that wicked one, notwithstanding his proud pretensions to holiness.

3. They made and worshipped the golden calf, and this in Horeb, there where the law was given, and God had expressly said, *Thou shalt neither make any graven image, nor bow down to it*; they did both; *They made a calf, and worshipped it*, ver. 19. Herein they bid defiance to, and put an affront upon; the two great lights which God has made to rule the little world. 1. That of human reason; for *they changed their glory*, their God, at least the manifestation of him, which always had been in a cloud (either a dark cloud, or a bright one) without any manner of visible similitude, *into the similitude of Apis*, one of the Egyptian idols, *an ox that eateth grass*, than which nothing could be more grossly and scandalously absurd, ver. 20. Idolaters are perfectly befotted, and put the greatest disparagement possible both upon God, in representing him by the image of a beast, and upon themselves, in worshipping it when they had done. That which is here said to be the changing of their glory is explained by St. Paul, *Rom. i. 23.* to be the *changing of the glory of the incorruptible God*. 2. That of divine revelation, which was afforded to them, not only in the words God spake to them, but the works he wrought for them, *wondrous works*, which spake loud, that the Lord Jehovah is the only true and living God, and is alone to be worshipped, ver. 21, 22.

For this God shewed his displeasure by declaring the decree, that he would cut them off from being a people, as they had, as far as lay in their power, in effect cut him off from being a God; he *spake of destroying them*, ver. 23. and certainly he had done it, if *Moses, his chosen, had not stood before him in the breach*, ver. 23. i. e. if he had not seasonably interposed to deal with God as an advocate, about the breach or ruin God was about to devote them to,

to, and wonderfully prevailed to turn away his wrath. See here the mercy of God, and how easily his anger is turned away, even from a provoking people. See the power of prayer, and the interest which God's chosen have in heaven. See a type of Christ, God's *chosen*, his *elect*, in whom his soul delighteth; who stood before him in the breach to turn away his wrath from a provoking world, and ever lives, for this end, making intercession.

4. They gave credit to the report of the evil spies concerning the land of Canaan, in contradiction to the promise of God, *ver. 24. They despised the pleasant land*; Canaan was a pleasant land, *Deut. viii. 7.* They undervalued it when they thought it not worth venturing for, no, not under the conduct of God himself, and therefore were for making a captain and returning to Egypt again. They believed not God's word concerning it, but murmured in their tents, basely charging God with a design upon them, in bringing them thither that they might become a prey to the Canaanites, *Numb. xiv. 2, 3.* And when they were minded of God's power and promise, were so far from hearkening to that voice of the Lord, that they attempted to stone those that spake to them, *Numb. xiv. 10.* The heavenly Canaan is a pleasant land; a promise is left us of entering into it, but there are many that despise it, that neglect and refuse the offer of it, that prefer the wealth and pleasure of this world before it, and grudge the pains and hazards of this life to obtain that.

This also was so displeasing to God, that he lifted up his hand against them, in a way of threatening, *to destroy them in the wilderness*; nay, in a way of swearing, for he swore in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest, *Psal. xcv. 10. Num. xiv. 28.* Nay, and he threatned that their children also should be *overthrown and scattered*, (*ver. 26, 27.*) and the whole nation dispersed and disinherited; but Moses prevailed for mercy for their seed, that they might enter Canaan. Note, Those who despise God's favours, and particularly the pleasant land, forfeit his favours, and will be shut out for ever from the pleasant land.

5. They were guilty of a great sin in the matter of Peor; and this was the sin of the new generation, when they were within a step of Canaan, *ver. 28. They joined themselves to Baal-peor*, and so were entangled both in idolatry and in adultery, in corporal and spiritual whoredom, *Num. xxv. 1, 2, 3.* They that did often partake of the altar of the living God, now eat the sacrifices of the dead, of the idols of Moab, that were dead images, or dead men canonized or deified; or sacrifices to the infernal deities, on the behalf of their dead friends. Thus they provoked God to anger with their inventions, *ver. 29.* in contempt of him and his institutions, his commands and threatnings. The iniquity of Peor was so great, that long after it is said *they were not cleansed from it*, *Josh. xxii. 17.*

God testified his displeasure at this, 1. By sending a plague among them, which, in a little time swept away twenty four thousand of those impudent sinners. 2. By stirring up Phinehas to use his power as a magistrate, for the suppressing of the sin, and checking the contagion of it. He stood up in his zeal for the Lord of hosts, and executed judgment upon Zimri and Cozbi, sinners of the first rank, genteel sinners; he put the law in execution upon them, and this was a service so pleasing to God, that upon it *the plague was staid*, *ver. 30.* By this, and some other like acts of publick justice on that occasion (*Num. xxv. 4, 5.*) the guilt ceased to be national, and the general controversy was let fall: when the proper officers did their duty, God left it to them, and did not any longer keep the work in his own hands by the plague. Note, National justice prevents national judgments. But Phinehas herein signalized himself, a special mark of honour was put upon him, for what he did was counted to him for righteousness to all generations, *ver. 31.* and in recompence of it, the priesthood was entailed on his family. He shall make an atonement by offering up the sacrifices, that had so bravely made an atonement (so some read it, *ver. 30.*) by offering up the sinners. Note, It is the honour of saints to be zealous against sin.

6. They continued their murmurings to the very last of their wanderings; for in the fortieth year they *angred God at the waters of strife*, *ver. 32.* which refers to that story, *Num. xx. 3, 4, 5.* And that which aggravated it now was, that *it went ill with Moses for their sakes*; for though he was the meekest of all the men in the earth, yet their clamours at that time were so peevish and provoking, that they put him into a passion, and being now grown very old, and off his guard, *he spake unadvisedly with his lips*, *ver. 33.* and not as became him upon that occasion; for he said in a heat, *hear now, you rebels, must we fetch water out of this rock for you?* This was Moses's infirmity, and is written for our admonition, that we may learn, when we are in the midst of provocation to keep our mouth as with a bridle, *Psal. xxxix. 1, 2, 3.* and to take heed to our spirits, that they admit not resentments too much, for when the spirit is provoked, it is much ado, even for those that have a great deal of wisdom and grace, nor to *speak unadvisedly*. But it is charged upon the people as their sin, *They provoked his spirit* with that which they angred God himself. Note, We must answer not only for our own passions, but for the provocation, which by them we give to the passions of others, especially of those, who, if not greatly provoked, would be meek and quiet.

God shews his displeasure against this sin of theirs, by shutting Moses and Aaron out of Canaan, for their miscarriage upon this occasion; by which, 1. God discovered his resentment of all such intemperate heats, even in the dearest of his servants. If he deals thus severely with Moses for one unadvised word, what doth their sin deserve, who had spoken so many presumptuous wicked words? *If this was done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* 2. God deprived them of the blessing of Moses's conduct and government, at a time when they most needed it, so that his death was more a punishment to them than to himself. It is just with God to remove those relations from us, that are blessings to us, when we are peevish and provoking to them; and grieve their spirits.

34. They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them: 35. But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. 36. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. 37. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, 38. And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood. 39. Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions. 40. Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance. 41. And he gave them into the hand of the heathen; and they that hated them ruled over them. 42. Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand. 43. Many times did he deliver them, but they provoked him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. 44. Nevertheless, he regarded their affliction when he heard their cry. 45. And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies. 46. He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives. 47. Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise. 48. Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD.

Here, 1. The narrative concludes with an account of Israel's carriage in Canaan, which was of a piece with that in the wilderness, and God's dealings with them, wherein, as all along, both justice and mercy appeared.

(1.) They were very provoking to God. The miracles and mercies which settled them in Canaan, made no more deep and durable impressions upon them, than those that fetched them out of Egypt; for by that time they were well warm in Canaan, they corrupted themselves, and forsook God. Observe the steps of their apostasy;

1. They spared the nations which God had doomed to destruction, *ver. 34.* when they had got the good land God had promised them, they had no zeal against the wicked inhabitants, whom the Lord commanded them to extirpate, pretending pity; but so merciful is God, that no man needs to be in any case more compassionate than he.

2. When they spared them, they promised themselves, that for all this, they would not join in any dangerous affinity with them; but the way of sin is down hill; omissions make way for commissions; when they neglect to *destroy the heathen*, the next news we hear is, they were *mingled among the heathen*, made leagues with them, and contracted an intimacy with them, so that they *learned their works*, *ver. 35.* That which is rotten will sooner corrupt than that which is sound, than be cured or made sound by it.

3. When they mingled with them, and learned some of their works that seemed innocent diversions and entertainments, yet they thought they would never join with them in their worship; but by degrees they learned that too, *ver. 36. They served their idols* in the same manner, and with the same rites that they served them; and they became a *snare to them*, that sin drew on many more, and brought the judgments of God upon them, which they themselves could not but be sensible of, and yet knew not how to recover themselves.

4. When they joined with them in some of their idolatrous services, which they thought had least harm in them, they little thought that ever they should be guilty of that barbarous and inhuman piece of idolatry, the sacrificing of their living children to their dead gods; but they came to that at last, *ver. 37, 38.* in which Satan triumphed over his worshippers, and regaled himself in blood and slaughter. *They sacrificed their sons and daughters*, pieces of themselves, to devils, and added murder, the most unnatural

natural murder, to their idolatry; one cannot think of it without horror; they *shed innocent blood*, the most innocent, for it was infant blood, nay, it was the *blood of their sons and their daughters*. See the power of the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, and see his malice. The beginning of idolatry and superstition, like that of strife, is as the letting forth of water, and there is no villainy, which they that venture upon it can be sure they shall stop short of, for God justly gives them up to a reprobate mind, Rom. 28.

Their sin was in part their own punishment; for by it, 1. They wronged their country. *The land was polluted with blood*, ver. 38. That pleasant land, that holy land was rendered uncomfortable to themselves, and unfit to receive those kind tokens of God's favour and presence in it, which were designed to be its honour. 2. They wronged their consciences, ver. 23. They *went a whoring with their own inventions*, and so debauched their own minds, and were *defiled with their own works*, and rendered odious in the eyes of the holy God, and, perhaps, of their own consciences.

(2.) God brought his judgments upon them; and what else could be expected? for his name is jealous, and he is a jealous God.

1. He fell out with them for it, ver. 40. He was angry with them, *the wrath of God* that consuming fire, *was kindled against his people*; for from them he took it more heinously, than from the heathen that never knew him; nay, he was sick of them, he abhorred his own inheritance, which, when time was, he had taken pleasure in; yet the change was not in him, but in them. This is the worst thing in sin, that it makes us loathsome to God, and the nearer any are to God in profession, the more loathsome are they if they rebel against him, like a dunghil at our door.

2. Their enemies then fell upon them, and their defence being departed, made an easy prey of them, ver. 41, 42. *He gave them into the hands of the heathen*. Observe here how the punishment answered the sin; they mingled themselves with the heathen, and learned their works, from them they willingly took the infection of sin, and therefore God justly made use of them as the instruments of their correction. Sinners often see themselves ruined by those, by whom they have suffered themselves to be debauched. Satan, that is a tempter, will be a tormenter. The heathen hated them; apostates lose all the love on God's side, and get none on Satan's; and when they that *hated them ruled over them*, and they were brought in subjection under them, no marvel they oppressed them, and ruled them with rigour; and thus God made them know the difference between *his service*, and the *service of the kings of the countries*, 2 Chron. xii. 8.

3. When God granted them some relief, yet they went on in their sins, and their troubles also were continued, ver. 43. This refers to the days of the Judges; when God many times raised up deliverers, and wrought deliverances for them, and yet they relapsed to idolatry, *provoked God with their counsel*, their idolatrous inventions, to deliver them up to some other oppressor, so that at last they were brought very low for their iniquity. Those that by sin disparage themselves, and will not by repentance humble themselves, it is just with God to debase them, and humble them, and bring them low by his judgments.

4. At length they cried unto God, and God returned in favour to them, ver. 44, 45, 46. They were chastened for their sins, but not destroyed, *cast down*, but not *cast off*; God appeared for them, (1.) As a God of mercy, that looked upon their grievances, *regarded their affliction*, *beheld when distress was upon them*, so some; that looked over their complaints, for he *heard their cry* with tender compassion, *Exod. iii. 7.* and overlooked their provocations; for though he had said, and had reason to say it, that he would destroy them, yet he *repented according to the multitude of his mercies*, and reversed the sentence; though he is not a man that he should repent, so as to change his mind, yet he is a gracious God that pities us and changeth his way. (2.) As a God of truth, that *remembered for them his covenant*, and made good every word that he had spoken; and therefore, as bad as they were, would not break with them, because he would not break his own promise. (3.) As the God of power, who has all hearts in his hand, and turns them which way soever he pleaseth. *He made them to be pitied*, even of those that carried them captives, and had hated them, and ruled them with rigour. He not only restrained the remainder of their enemies wrath, that it should not utterly consume them, but he infused compassion, even into their stony hearts, and made them relent, which was more than any art of man could have done with the utmost force of rhetoric. Note, God can change lions into lambs, and *when a mans ways please the Lord*, will make even his enemies to pity him, and be at peace with him. When God pities, men shall: *Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia*.

2. The psalm concludes with prayer and praise.

1. Prayer for the completing of his peoples deliverance: even then when the Lord brought back the captivity of his people, still there was occasion to pray, *Lord, turn again our captivity*, Psalm cxxvi. 1. 4. so here, ver. 47. *Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen*. We may suppose, that many who were forced into foreign countries in the times of the Judges (as Naomi was, *Ruth i. 1.*) were not returned in the beginning of David's reign, Saul's time being discouraging, and therefore it was seasonable to pray, *Lord, gather the dispersed Israelites from among the*

heathen, to give thanks to thy holy name; not only that they may have cause to give thanks, and hearts to give thanks, but that they may have opportunity to do it in the courts of the Lord's house, from which they were now banished; and so may *triumph in thy praise*, over those that had in scorn challenged them to *sing the Lord's song in a strange land*.

2. Praise for the beginning and progress of it, ver. 48. *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting*. He is a blessed God from eternity, and will be so to eternity, and so let him be praised by all his worshippers. Let the priests say this, and then let all the people say, *Amen, Hallelujah*, in token of their cheerful concurrence in all these prayers, praises and confessions. According to this rubrick or directory; we find that when this psalm (or at least the closing verses of it) was sung, all the people said, *Amen*, and praised the Lord by saying, *Hallelujah*. By these two comprehensive words it is very proper, in religious assemblies, to testify their joining with their ministers in the prayers and praises, which, as their mouth, they offer up to God, according to his will, saying *Amen* to the prayers, and *Hallelujah* to the praises.

P S A L M CVII.

The psalmist having, in the two foregoing psalms, celebrated the wisdom, power, and goodness of God in his dealings with his church in particular, here observes some of the instances of his providential care of the children of men in general, especially in their distresses; for he is not only King of saints, but King of nations, not only the God of Israel, but the God of the whole earth, and a common Father to all mankind. Though this may especially refer to Israelites in their personal capacity, yet there were those that pertained not to the commonwealth of Israel, and yet were worshippers of the true God; and even those that worshipped images, yet had some knowledge of a supreme Numen, to whom, when they were in earnest, they looked above all their false gods. And of these, when they prayed in their distresses, God took a particular care. 1. He instances in some of the most common calamities of human life; and shews how God succours those that labour under them, in answer to their prayers. (1.) Banishment and dispersion, ver. 2, — 9. (2.) Captivity and imprisonment, ver. 10, — 16. (3.) Sickness and distemper of body, ver. 17, — 22. (4.) Danger and distress at sea, ver. 23, — 33. And these are put for all the like perils, in which those that cry unto God have ever found him a very present help. 2. He instanceth in the varieties and vicissitudes of events, concerning nations and families; in all which God's hand is to be eyed by his own people, with joyful acknowledgments of his goodness, ver. 33, — 43. When we are in any of these or the like distresses, it will be comfortable to sing this psalm with application; but if we be not, others are and have been, of whose deliverance it becomes us to give God the glory, for we are members one of another.

1. **O** Give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. 2. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy: 3. And gathered them out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. 4. They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way, they found no city to dwell in. 5. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. 6. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses. 7. And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. 8. Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men: 9. For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

Here is, 1. A general call to all to give thanks to God, ver. 1. Let all that sing this psalm, or pray it over, set themselves herein to give thanks to the Lord; and those that have not any special matter for praise, may furnish themselves with matter enough from God's universal goodness; in the fountain, *he is good*, in the streams, *his mercy endureth for ever*, and never faileth. 2. A particular demand hereof from the redeemed of the Lord; which may well be applied spiritually to those that have an interest in the great Redeemer, and are saved by him from sin and hell. They have, of all people, most reason to say, that God is good, and his mercy everlasting; these are the children of God that were scattered abroad, whom Christ died to gather together in one, out of all lands, *John xi. 52. Matt. xxiv. 31.* But it seems here to be meant of a temporal deliverance, wrought for them when in their distress, they cried unto the Lord, ver. 6. *Is any afflicted? let him pray*. Doth any pray? God will certainly hear and help. When troubles are in extremity, that is man's time to cry; those who but whispered prayer before, then cried aloud; and then it is God's time to succour; in the mount he will be seen.

1. They were in an enemy's country, but God wrought out their rescue; he redeemed them from the hand of the enemy, ver. 2.

not by *might or power*, it may be, *Zech. iv. 6.* nor by *price or reward*, *Isa. xlv. 13.* but by the Spirit of God, working on the spirits of men.

2. They were dispersed as out-casts; but God gathered them out of all the countries whither they were scattered in the cloudy and dark day, that they might again be incorporated, *ver. 3.* See *Deut. xxx. 4.* *Ezek. xxxiv. 12.* God knows those that are his, and where to find them.

3. They were bewildered, had no road to travel in, no dwelling-place to rest in, *ver. 4.* When they were *redeemed out of the hand of the enemy, and gathered out of the lands*, they were in danger of perishing in their return home through the dry and barren deserts. *They wandered in the wilderness*, where there was no trodden path; no company, but a *solitary way*; no lodging, no conveniences, no accommodations, no inhabited city, where they might have quarters of refreshment. But God *led them forth by the right way*, *ver. 7.* directed them to an inn, nay, directed them to a home, *that they might go to a city of habitation*, which was inhabited; nay, which they themselves should inhabit. This may refer to poor travellers in general, those particularly, whose way lies through the wilds of Arabia, where we may suppose they were often at a loss; and yet many in that distress were wonderfully relieved, so that few perished. Note, We ought to take notice of the good hand of God's providence over us in our journies, going out, and coming in, directing us in our way, and providing for us places, both to bait in, and rest in. Or (as some think) it has an eye to the wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness for forty years; it is said, *Deut. xxxii. 10.* *God led them about*, and yet here *he led them by the right way*: God's way, though to us it seems about, will appear, at last, to have been the right way. It is applicable to our condition in this world; we are here as in a wilderness, have here *no continuing city*, but dwell in tents as strangers and pilgrims: but we are under the conduct of his wise and good providence, which if we commit our selves to, we shall be *led in the right way to the city that hath foundations*.

4. They were ready to perish for hunger, *ver. 5.* *Their soul even fainted in them*; spent with the fatigues of their journey, and ready to drop down for want of refreshment. They that have constant plenty, and are every day fed to the full, know not what a miserable case it is to be hungry and thirsty, and have no supply. This was sometimes the case of Israel in the wilderness, and, perhaps, of other poor travellers; but God's providence finds out ways to *satisfy the longing soul, and fill the hungry soul with goodness*, *ver. 9.* Israel's wants were reasonably supplied, and many have been wonderfully relieved, when they were ready to perish; the same God that has led us, has fed us all our life long unto this day; has fed us with food convenient; has provided food for the soul, and *filled the hungry soul with goodness*. *They that hunger and thirst after righteousness*, after God, the living God, and communion with him, shall be abundantly *replenished with the goodness of his house*, both in grace and glory.

Now for all this, they who receive mercy are called upon to return thanks, *ver. 8.* *O that men* (it is meant especially of these men whom God has graciously relieved) *would praise the Lord for his goodness to them*, in particular, *and for his wonderful works to others of the children of men*. Note, 1. God's works of mercy are wonderful works, works of wonderful power, considering the weakness, and of wonderful grace, considering the unworthiness of those he shews mercy to. 2. Those who receive mercy from God, it is expected they return praise to him. 3. We must acknowledge God's goodness to the children of men, as well as to the children of God; to others as well as to our selves.

10. Such as sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, *being bound in affliction and iron*: 11. Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the 'most High': 12. Therefore he brought down their heart with labour, they fell down, and *there was none to help*. 13. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses. 14. He brought them out of darkness, and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. 15. Oh that *men* would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men: 16. For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.

We are to take notice of the goodness of God towards prisoners and captives. Observe,

1. A description of this affliction. Prisoners are said to *sit in darkness*, *ver. 10.* in dark dungeons, close prisons: it intimates that they are desolate and disconsolate, they sit *in the shadow of death*; which intimates, not only great distress and trouble, but great danger: Prisoners are many times appointed to die; they sit despairing to get out, but resolving to make the best of it. They are *bound in affliction and*, many times, in *iron*, as Joseph. Thus fore a calamity is imprisonment, which should make us prize liberty, and be thankful for it.

2. The cause of this affliction, *ver. 11.* It is *because they rebelled against the words of God*; wilful sin is rebellion against the words of God: it is a contradiction to his truths, and a violation of his laws. They *contemned the counsel of the most High*, and thought they neither needed it, nor could be the better for it; and they that will not be counselled cannot be helped. They that despise prophesying, that regard not the admonitions of their own consciences, nor the just reproofs of their friends, *contemn the counsel of the most High*, and for this they are *bound in affliction*, both to punish them for, and to reclaim them from their rebellions.

3. The design of this affliction, and that is to bring *down their heart*, *ver. 12.* to humble them for sin, to make them low in their own eyes, to cast down every high, proud, aspiring thought. Afflicting providences must be improved as humbling providences; and we not only lose the benefit of them, but thwart God's design, and walk contrary to him in them, if our hearts be unhumbled and unbroken, as high and hard as ever under them. Is the estate brought down with labour? the honour sunk? Are those that exalted themselves fallen down, and is there none to help them? Let this bring down the spirit to confess sin, to accept the punishment of it, and humbly to sue for mercy and grace.

4. The duty of this afflicted state, and that is to pray, *ver. 13.* *Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble*, though before, perhaps, they had neglected him. Prisoners have time to pray, who when they are at liberty could not find time; they see they have need of God's help, who formerly thought they could do well enough without him. Sense will make men cry when they are in trouble, but grace will direct them to cry unto the Lord, from whom the affliction comes, and who alone can remove it.

5. Their deliverance out of the affliction. *They cried unto the Lord, and he saved them*, *ver. 13.* *He brought them out of darkness into light*, welcome light, and then doubly sweet and pleasant, *brought them out of the shadow of death* to the comforts of life, and their liberty was to them life from the dead, *ver. 14.* Were they fettered? *He brake their bands asunder*. Were they imprisoned in strong castles? *He broke the gates of brass, and the bars of iron*, wherewith those gates were made fast, he did not put back, but *cut in sunder*. Note, When God will work deliverance the greatest difficulties that lie in the way shall be made nothing of. Gates of brass and bars of iron, as they cannot keep him out from his people, (he was with Joseph in the prison) so they cannot keep them in, when the time, the set time for their enlargement is come.

6. The return that is required from those whose bands God has loosed, *ver. 15.* *Let them praise the Lord for his goodness*, and take occasion from their own experience of it, and share in it, to bless him for that goodness which the earth is full of, *the world and they that dwell therein*.

17. Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. 18. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat, and they draw near unto the gates of death. 19. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, he saveth them out of their distresses. 20. He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. 21. Oh that *men* would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men. 22. And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.

Bodily sickness is another of the calamities of this life, which gives us an opportunity of experiencing the goodness of God in recovering us; and of that the psalmist speaks in these verses, where we may observe,

1. That we, by our sins, bring sickness upon our selves, and then it is our duty to pray, *ver. 17, 18, 19.*

(1.) It is the sin of the soul that is the cause of sickness; we bring it upon our selves, both meritoriously and efficiently. *Fools, because of their transgression, are thus afflicted*; they are thus corrected for the sins they have committed, and thus cured of their evil inclinations to sin. If we knew no sin, we should know no sickness; but the transgression of our life, and the iniquity of our heart, makes it necessary. Sinners are fools, they wrong themselves, and all against their own interest; not only their spiritual, but their secular interest; they prejudice their bodily health by their intemperance, and endanger their lives by indulging their appetites. This their way is their folly, and they need the rod of correction to drive out their foolishness that is bound up in their hearts.

(2.) The weakness of the body is the effect of sickness, *ver. 18.* when people are sick *their soul abhorreth all manner of meat*, they not only have no desire to it, nor power to digest it, but they nauseate it, and their stomach is turned against it: and here they may read their sin in their punishment; they that doted most on the meat that perisheth, when they come to be sick are sick of it, and the dainties they loved are loathed: what they took too much of, now they can take nothing of, which commonly follows upon the overcharging of the heart with surfeiting and drunkenness. And when the stomach's gone, the life is as good as gone, *they draw near unto the*

the gates of death, they are in their own apprehension, and in the apprehension of all about them, at the brink of the grave, and ready to be turned to destruction.

(3.) Then is a proper time for prayer, *Then they cry unto the Lord*, ver. 19. Is any sick? let him pray, let him be prayed for; prayer is a salve for every sore.

2. That it is by the power and mercy of God, that we are recovered from sickness, and then it is our duty to be thankful. Compare with this *Job xxxiii. 19, 28.*

(1.) When those that are sick call upon God, he returns them an answer of peace. They cry unto him, and he *saaveth them out of their distresses*, ver. 19. he removes their griefs, and prevents their fears. 1. He doth it easily: *He sent his word and healed them*, ver. 20. This may be applied to the miraculous cures which Christ wrought, when he was upon earth, by a word's speaking: He said, *be clean, be whole*, and the work was done. And to the spiritual cures which the Spirit of grace works in regeneration; he sends his word and heals souls; convinceth, converteth, sanctifieth them, and all by the word. In the common instances of recovery from sickness, God, in his providence, doth but speak it, and it is done. 2. He doth it effectually, he *delivereth them out of their distresses*, that they shall neither be destroyed, nor distressed with the fear of being so. Nothing is too hard for that God to do, who kills and makes alive again, brings down to the grave, and raises up; who *turneth man almost to destruction*, and yet saith, *Return*.

(2.) When those that have been sick are recovered, they must return to God an answer of praise, ver. 21, 22. *Let all men praise the Lord for his goodness*, and let them, particularly, to whom God has thus granted a new life, spend it in his service; *let them sacrifice thanksgiving*; not only bring a thank-offering to the altar, but a thankful heart to God. Thanksgivings are the best thank-offerings, and shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock. *And let them declare his works with rejoicing to his honour*, and for the encouragement of others. *The living, the living, they shall praise him.*

23. They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters: 24. These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep. 25. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. 26. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths, their soul is melted because of trouble. 27. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits end. 28. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. 29. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. 30. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. 31. Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men. 32. Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

The psalmist here calls upon these to give glory to God, who are delivered from dangers at sea. Though the Israelites dealt not much in merchandize, yet their neighbours, the Tyrians and Zidonians, did, and for them, perhaps, this part of the psalm was especially calculated.

1. Much of the power of God appears at all times in the sea, ver. 23, 24. *They that go down to the sea in ships*, as mariners, merchants, fishermen or passengers, *that do business in great waters*; (and sure none will expose themselves there, but those that have business; among all Solomon's pleasant things, we do not read of any pleasure-boat he had; but those that go on business, lawful business, may, in faith, put themselves under the divine protection.) *These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders*; which are the more surprizing, because most are born and bred upon land; and what passeth at sea is new to them. The deep it self is a wonder, its vastness, its saltness, its ebbing and flowing. The great variety of living creatures in the sea, is wonderful. Let those that go to sea, by all the wonders they observe there, be led to consider and adore the infinite perfections of that God, whose the sea is, for he made it, and manageth it.

2. It especially appears in storms at sea, which are much more terrible than at land. Observe here,

(1.) How dangerous and dreadful a tempest at sea is. Then wonders begin to appear in the deep, when God *commandeth and raiseth the strong wind*, which *fulfilleth his word*, Psalm cxlviii. 8. He raiseth the winds, as a prince, by his commission, raiseth forces. Satan pretends to be the prince of the power of the air; but he is a pretender; the powers of the air are at God's command, not at his. When the wind becomes stormy, it *lifteth up the waves of the sea*, ver. 25. Then the ships are kicked like tennis-balls, on the tops of the waves; they seem to *mount up to the heavens*, and then couch again, as if they would go down to the

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depths, ver. 26. A stranger that had never seen it; would not think it possible for a ship to live at sea; as it will in a storm, and ride it out, but would expect that the next wave should bury it, and it should never come up again: and yet God; who taught man discretion to make ships that should so strangely keep above water, doth by his special providence preserve them; that they answer the end to admiration. When the ships are thus tossed; the *soul of the seamen melts because of trouble*; and when the storm is very high; even those that are used to the sea can neither shake off nor dissemble their fears; but *they reel to and fro*, the tossing makes them giddy, and they stagger and are sick, it may be, *like a drunken man*: the whole ship's crew is in confusion, and quite at their wits end, ver. 27. not knowing what to do more for their own preservation; all their wisdom is swallowed up, and they are ready to give up themselves for gone, *Jonah i. 5, &c.*

(2.) How seasonable it is at such a time to pray. They that go to sea must expect such perils as are here described, and the best preparation they can make for them, is to make sure a liberty of access to God by prayer, for *then they will cry unto the Lord*, ver. 28. We use to say, They that will learn to pray; let them go to sea; I say, They that will go to sea, let them learn to pray, and use to pray, that they may come with the more boldness to the throne of grace, when they are in trouble. Even heathen mariners, in a storm, *cried every man to his god*; but they that have the Lord for their God, have a present and powerful help in that; and every other time of need, so that when they are at their wits end, they are not at their faith's end.

(3.) How wonderfully God sometimes appears for those that are in distress at sea, in answer to their prayers; he *bringeth them out of the danger*, and, 1. The sea is still; *he maketh the storm a calm*, ver. 29. The winds fall, and only by their soft and gentle murmurs serve to lull the waves asleep again, so that the surface of the sea becomes smooth and smiling: By this Christ proved himself to be more than a man, *that even the winds and the seas obeyed him*. 2. The seamen are made easy; *they are glad because they be quiet*; quiet from the noise, quiet from the fear of evil. Quietness after a storm is a very desirable thing, and sensibly pleasant. 3. The voyage becomes prosperous and successful; *so he bringeth them to their desired haven*, ver. 30. Thus he carries his people safe through all the storms and tempests that they meet with in their voyage heaven-wards; and lands them at length in the desired harbour.

(4.) How justly it is expected that all those who have had a safe passage over the sea, and especially that have been delivered from remarkable perils at sea, should acknowledge it with thankfulness to the glory of God. Let them do it privately in their closets and families, ver. 31. Let them *praise the Lord for his goodness*, to themselves and others; let them do it publicly, ver. 32. *in the congregation of the people, and in the assembly of the elders*; there let them erect the memorials of their deliverance, to the honour of God, and for the encouragement of others to trust him.

33. He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the water-springs into dry ground: 34. A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein. 35. He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water-springs. 36. And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation; 37. And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase. 38. He blesteth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly, and suffereth not their cattle to decrease. 39. Again they are diminished and brought low through oppression, affliction and sorrow. 40. He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way. 41. Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock. 42. The righteous shall see it, and rejoice; and all iniquity shall stop her mouth. 43. Whoso is wise, and will observe those things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the LORD.

The psalmist having given God the glory of the providential reliefs granted to persons in distress, here gives him the glory of the revolutions of providence, and the surprizing changes it sometimes makes in the affairs of the children of men.

1. He gives some instances of these revolutions,

(1.) Fruitful countries are made barren, and barren countries are made fruitful: Much of the comfort of this life depends upon the soil in which our lot is cast. Now, 1. The sin of man has often marred the fruitfulness of the soil, and made it unserviceable, ver. 33, 34. Land watered with rivers, is sometimes turned into a wilderness, and that which had been full of water-springs, now has not so much as water-streams, it is turned into dry and sandy ground, that has not consistency and moisture enough to produce any thing valuable. Many a fruitful land is turned into saltness, not so much from natural causes, as from the just judgment of God, who thus punisheth the wickedness of them that dwell therein; as the vale of

Sodom became a salt sea. Note, If the land be bad, it is because the inhabitants are so. Justly is the ground made unfruitful to them that bring not forth fruit unto God, but serve Baal with their corn and wine. 2. The goodness of God has often mended the barrenness of the soil, and turned a *wilderness*, a land of drought, into *water-springs*, ver. 35. The land of Canaan, which was once the glory of all lands for fruitfulness, is said to be at this day a fruitless, useless, worthless spot of ground, as was foretold, *Deut.* xxix. 23. This land of ours, which formerly was much of it an uncultivated desert, is now full of all good things, and *more abundant honour is given to that part which lacked*. Let the plantations in America, and the colonies settled there, compared with the desolations of many countries in Asia and Europe, that formerly were famous, expound this. (2.) Neceffitous families are raised and enriched, while prosperous families are impoverished and go to decay. If we look abroad in the world, 1. We see many greatly increasing, whose beginning was small, and whose ancestors were mean, and made no figure, ver. 36, 37, 38. Those that were hungry are made to dwell in fruitful lands, there they take root, gain a settlement, and prepare a city for habitation for themselves, and theirs after them. Providence puts good land under their hands, and they build upon it. Cities took rise from rising families. But as lands will not serve for men without lodgings, and therefore they must prepare a city of habitation; so lodgings, though never so convenient, will not serve without lands, and therefore they must sow the fields, and plant vineyards, ver. 37. for the king himself is served of the field. And yet the fields, though water-springs, will not yield fruits of increase, unless they be sown, nor will vineyards be had unless they be planted; man's industry must attend God's blessing, and then God's blessing will crown man's industry. The fruitfulness of the soil should engage, for it doth encourage diligence; and ordinarily the hand of the diligent, by the blessing of God, maketh rich, ver. 38. He blesteth them also, so that they are, in a little time, multiplied greatly, and he diminisheth not their cattle. As in the beginning, so still it is, by the blessing of God, that the earth and all the creatures increase and multiply, Gen. i. 22. and we depend upon God for the increase of the cattle, as well as for the increase of the ground: Cattle would decrease many ways, if God should but permit it, and men would soon suffer by it. 2. We see many that have thus suddenly risen, as suddenly sunk and brought to nothing, ver. 39. Again they are diminished and brought low, by cross providences, and end their days as low as they began them; or their families after them lose as fast as they got, and scatter what they heaped together. Note, Worldly wealth is an uncertain thing; and many times those that are filled with it, before they are aware, grow so secure and sensual with it, that, ere they are aware, they lose it again. Hence it is called deceitful riches, and the *mammon of unrighteousness*. God has many ways of making men poor; he can do it by oppression, affliction and sorrow, as he tempted Job, and brought him low.

(3.) Those that are high and great in the world are abased, and those that were mean and despicable are advanced to honour, ver. 40, 41. We have seen, 1. Princes dethroned, and reduced to streights. He poureth contempt upon them, even among those that have idolized them. They that exalt themselves God will abase; and, in order thereunto, will infatuate; he maketh them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way. He baffles those counsels by which they thought to support themselves, and their own power and pomp, and turns them headlong, so that they know not what course to steer, or what measures to take. We met with this before, *Job* xii. 24, 25. 2. Those of low degree advanced to the posts of honour, ver. 41. Yet setteth he the poor on high, raiseth from the dust, to the throne of glory, 1 Sam. ii. 8. Psalm cxiii. 7, 8. Those that were afflicted, and trampled on, are not only delivered, but set on high, out of the reach of their troubles, above their enemies, and have dominion over those to whom they had been in subjection. And that which adds to their honour, and strengthens them in their elevation, is the multitude of their children; he maketh him families like a flock of sheep, so numerous, so useful, so sociable with one another, and so meek and peaceable. He that sent them meat, sent them mouths: Happy is the man that hath his quiver filled with arrows, for he shall boldly speak with the enemy in the gate, Psalm cxxvii. 5. God is to be acknowledged both in setting up, and building up of families. Let not princes be envied, nor the poor despised, for God has many ways of changing the condition of both.

2. He makes some improvement of these remarks; such surprising turns as these are of use;

(1.) For the solacing of saints; they observe these dispensations with pleasure, ver. 42. The righteous shall see it, and rejoice, in the glorifying of God's attributes, and the manifesting of his dominion over the children of men. It is a great comfort to a good man to see how God manageth the children of men, as the potter doth the clay, so as to serve his own purposes by them; to see despised virtue advanced, and impious pride brought low to the dust; to see it evinced beyond dispute, that verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.

(2.) For the silencing of sinners; All iniquity shall stop her mouth, i. e. it shall be a full conviction of the folly of atheists, and of those that deny the divine providence; and forasmuch as practical

atheism is at the bottom of all sin, it shall, in effect, stop the mouth of all iniquity. When sinners see how their punishment answers their sin, and how justly God deals with them in taking away from them those gifts of his which they had abused, they shall not have one word to say for themselves; for God will be justified, he will be clear.

(3.) For the satisfying of all concerning the divine goodness, ver. 43. Who is wise, and will observe these things, these various dispensations of divine providence, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord. Here is, 1. A desirable end proposed, and that is, rightly to understand the loving kindness of the Lord. It is of great use to us in religion, to be fully assured of God's goodness; to be experimentally acquainted, and duly affected with it; that his loving kindness may be before our eyes, Psalm xxvi. 3. 2. A proper means prescribed for attaining this end; and that is a due observing of God's providence. We must lay up these things, mind them, and keep them in mind, Luke ii. 19. 3. A commendation of the use of this means, as an instance of true wisdom: Who is wise, let him, by this, both prove his wisdom and improve it. A prudent observation of the providences of God, will contribute very much to the accomplishing of a good christian.

P S A L M CVIII.

This psalm begins with praise and concludes with prayer, and faith is at work in both. 1. David here gives thanks to God for mercies to himself, ver. 1,—5. 2. He prays to God for mercies for the land, pleading the promises of God, and putting them in suit, ver. 6,—13. The former part is taken out of psalm lvii. 7, &c. the latter out of psalm lx. 5, &c. and both with very little variation; to teach us, that we may in prayer use the same words that we have formerly used, provided it be with new affections. It intimates likewise that it is not only allowable, but sometimes convenient, to gather some verses out of one psalm, and some out of another, and to put them together to be sung to the glory of God. In singing this psalm, we must give glory to God, and take comfort to our selves.

¶ A song or psalm of David.

1. **O** God, my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise, even with my glory. 2. Awake, psaltery and harp: I my self will awake early. 3. I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people: and I will sing praises unto thee among the nations. 4. For thy mercy is great above the heavens: and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds. 5. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth:

We may here learn how to praise God, from the example of one who was master of the art.

1. We must praise God with fixedness of heart; our heart must be employed in the duty, else we make nothing of it, and engaged to the duty; ver. 1. O God, my heart is fixed, and then I will sing and give praise. Wandring, straggling thoughts must be gathered in, and kept close to the business; for they must be told here is work enough for them all.

2. We must praise God with freeness of expression; I will praise him with my glory, i. e. with my tongue; our tongue is our glory, and never more so, than when it is employed in praising God. When the heart is inditing this good matter, our tongue must be as the pen of a ready writer, Psalm xlv. 1. David's skill in musick was his glory, it made him famous, and this should be consecrated to the praise of God; and therefore it follows, Awake, my psaltery and harp. Whatever gift we excel in, we must praise God with.

3. We must praise God with fervency of affection, and must stir up our selves to do it, that it may be done in a lively manner, and not carelessly, ver. 2. Awake, psaltery and harp; let it not be done with a dull and sleepy tune, but let the airs be all lively. I my self will awake early to do it, with all that is within me, and all little enough. Warm devotions honour God.

4. We must praise God publicly, as those that are not ashamed to own our obligations to him, and our thankful sense of his favours, but desire that others also may be in like manner affected with the divine goodness, ver. 3. I will praise thee among the people of the Jews; nay, I will sing to thee among the nations of the earth. Whatever company we are in, we must take all occasions to speak well of God; and we must not be shy of singing psalms, though our neighbours hear us; for it looks like being ashamed of our master.

5. We must in our praises magnify the mercy and truth of God in a special manner, ver. 4. mercy in promising, truth in performing. The heavens are vast, but the mercy of God is more capacious: the skies are high and bright, but the truth of God is more eminent, more illustrious. We cannot see further than the heavens and clouds; whatever we see of God's mercy and truth, there is still more to be seen, more reserved to be seen in the other world.

6. Since we find our selves so defective in glorifying God, we must beg of him to glorify himself, to do all, to dispose all to his own glory, to get himself honour, and make himself a name, ver. 6.

Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens, higher than the angels themselves can exalt thee with their praises; and let thy glory be spread over all the earth. Father, glorify thine own name; thou hast glorified it, glorify it again. It is to be our first petition, Hallowed be thy name.

6. That thy beloved may be delivered: save with thy right hand, and answer me. 7. God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. 8. Gilead is mine, Manasseh is mine, Ephraim also is the strength of mine head, Judah is my law-giver. 9. Moab is my wash-pot, over Edom will I cast out my shoe: over Philistia will I triumph. 10. Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom? 11. Wilt not thou, O God, who hast cast us off? and wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts? 12. Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man. 13. Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies.

We may here learn how to pray as well as praise.

1. We must be publick spirited in prayer, and bear upon our hearts, at the throne of grace, the concerns of the church of God, ver. 6. It is God's beloved, and therefore must be ours; and therefore we must pray for its deliverance, and reckon we are answered, if God grant what we ask for his church, though he delay to give us what we ask for our selves. *Save thy church, and thou answerest me; I have what I would have. Let the earth be filled with God's glory, and the prayers of David are ended, Psalm lxxii. ult. he desires no more.*

2. We must in prayer act faith, upon the power and promise of God; upon his power, *Save with thy right hand*, which is mighty to save; and upon his promise, *God hath spoken in his holiness*, in his holy word, to which he hath sworn by his holiness, and therefore *I will rejoice*, ver. 7. What he has promised he will perform, for it is the word both of his truth and of his power. An active faith can rejoice in what God hath said, though it be not yet done; for with him saying and doing are not two things, whatever they are with us.

3. We must in prayer take the comfort of what God has secured to us and settled upon us, though we are not yet put in the possession of it. God had promised David to give him, (1.) The hearts of his subjects, and therefore he surveys the several parts of the country as his own already, Shechem and Succoth, Gilead and Manasseh, Ephraim and Judah, they are all my own, ver. 8. with such assurance as this we may speak of the performance of what God has promised to the Son of David; he will, without fail, give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession; for so hath he spoken in his holiness; nay, of all the particular persons that were given him he will lose none; he also, as David, shall have the hearts of his subjects, John vi. 37. And (2.) The necks of his enemies; these are promised, and therefore David looks upon Moab, and Edom, and Philistia as his own already, ver. 4. *Over Philistia will I triumph*, which explains, *Psal. lx. 8. Philistia, triumph thou because of me*; which, some think, should be read, *O my soul, triumph thou over Philistia*. Thus the exalted Redeemer is set down at God's right hand, in a full assurance that all his enemies shall, in due time, be made his footstool, though all things are not yet put under him, Heb. ii. 8.

4. We must take encouragement from the beginning of mercy, to pray and hope for the perfecting of it, ver. 10, 11. *Who will bring me into the strong cities*, that are yet unconquered? Who will make me master of the country of Edom, which is yet unsubdued? This question, probably, was to be debated in his privy-council, or a council of war, what methods they should take to subdue the Edomites, and to reduce that country; but he brings it into his prayers, and leaves it in God's hands, *Wilt not thou, O God?* certainly thou wilt. It is probable he spoke with the more assurance concerning the conquest of Edom, because of the ancient oracle concerning Jacob and Esau, that *the elder should serve the younger*, and the blessing of Jacob, by which he was made Esau's lord, Gen. xxvii. 37.

5. We must not be discouraged in prayer, nor beaten off from our hold of God, though providence has, in some instances, frowned upon us: though thou hast cast us off, yet thou wilt now go forth with our hosts, ver. 11. Thou wilt comfort us again, after the time that thou hast afflicted us. Cross events are sometimes intended for the trial of the constancy of our faith and prayer, which we ought to persevere in, whatever difficulties we meet with, and not to faint.

6. We must seek help from God, renouncing all confidence in the creature, ver. 12. *Lord, give us help from trouble*, prosper our designs, and defeat the designs of our enemies against us; it is not unreasonable to talk of trouble at the same time that we talk of triumphs, especially when it is to quicken prayer for help from heaven: and it is a good plea, *Vain is the help of man*. It is really so, and therefore we are undone if God do not help us, we apprehend

it so; and therefore depend upon thee for help, and have the more reason to expect it.

7. We must depend entirely upon the favour and grace of God, both for strength and success in our work and warfare. ver. 13. (1.) We must do our part, but we can do nothing of our selves, it is only through God that we shall do valiantly. Blessed Paul will own that even he can do nothing, nothing to purpose, but through Christ strengthening him, Phil. iv. 13. (2.) When we have acquitted our selves never so well, yet we cannot speed by any merit or might of our own; it is God himself that treads down our enemies, else we, with all our valour, cannot do it. Whatever we do, whatever we gain, God must have all the glory.

P S A L M CIX.

Whether David penned this psalm when he was persecuted by Saul, or when his son Absalom rebelled against him, or upon occasion of some other trouble that was given him, is uncertain; and whether the particular enemy he prays against was Saul, or Doeg, or Ahithophel, or some other not mentioned in the story, we cannot determine; but it is certain, that in penning it he had an eye to Christ, his sufferings and his persecutors, for that imprecation, ver. 8. is applied to Judas, Acts i. 20. And the rest of the prayers here against his enemies were the expressions not of passion, but of the spirit of prophecy. 1. He lodgeth a complaint in the court of heaven, of the malice and base ingratitude of his enemies, and with it an appeal to the righteous God, ver. 1.—5. 2. He prays against his enemies, and devotes them to destruction, ver. 6.—20. 3. He prays for himself, that God would help and succour him in his low condition, ver. 21.—29. 4. He concludes with a joyful expectation that God would appear for him, ver. 30, 31. In singing this psalm we must comfort ourselves with the believing foresight of the certain destruction of all the enemies of Christ and his Church, and the certain salvation of all those that trust in God, and keep close to him.

¶ To the chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

1. **H**old not thy peace, O God of my praise. 2. For the mouth of the wicked, and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. 3. They compassed me about also with words of hatred: and fought against me without a cause. 4. For my love, they are my adversaries: but I give myself unto prayer. 5. And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.

It is the unspeakable comfort of all good people, that whoever is against them, God is for them, and to him they may apply themselves, as to one that is pleased to concern himself for them: Thus David here,

1. He refers himself to God's judgment, ver. 1. *Hold not thy peace*, but let my sentence come forth from thy presence, Psal. xvii. 2. Delay not to give judgment upon the appeal made to thee. God saw what his enemies did against him, but seemed to connive at it, and to keep silence; Lord, faith he, do not always do so. The title he gives to God is observable, *O God of my praise*; the God in whom I glory, and not in any wisdom or strength of my own; from whom I have every thing that is my praise; or, the God whom I have praised, and will praise, and hope to be for ever praising. He calls God, the *God of his mercy*, Psal. lix. 10. here *the God of his praise*; forasmuch as God is the *God of our mercies*, we must make him the *God of our praises*; if all is of him and from him, all must be to him and for him.

2. He complains of his enemies, shewing that they were such as it was fit for the righteous God to appear against. (1.) They were very spiteful and malicious; they are wicked, they delight in doing mischief, ver. 2. their words are words of hatred, ver. 3. They had an implacable enmity to a good man, because of his goodness. They open their mouths against me to swallow me up, and fight against me to cut me off, if they could. (2.) They were notorious liars, and that is two of the seven things which the Lord hates. They are deceitful in their protestations and professions of kindness, while at the same time they speak against me, behind my back, with a lying tongue. They were equally false in their own flatteries and in their calumnies. (3.) They were both politick and restless in their designs. They compassed me about on all sides, so that which way soever I looked I could see nothing but what made against me. (4.) They were unjust, their accusations of him, and sentence against him were all groundless, they have fought against me without a cause, I never gave them any provocation; nay, which was worst of all, (5.) They were very ungrateful, and rewarded him evil for good, ver. 5. Many a kindness he had done them, and was, upon all occasions, ready to do them, and yet he could not work upon them to abate their malice against him; but, on the contrary, they were the more exasperated, because they could not provoke him to give them some occasion against him, ver. 4. *For my love they are my adversaries*. The more he endeavoured to gratify

tify them, the more they hated him. We may wonder that it is possible any should be so wicked; and yet, since there have been so many instances of it, we should not wonder if any be so wicked against us.

3. He resolves to keep close to his duty, and take the comfort of that; *but I give myself unto prayer*, ver. 4. *I pray*, so it is in the original; I am for prayer, I am a man of prayer, I love prayer, and prize prayer, and practise prayer, and make a business of prayer, and am in my element when I am at prayer. A good man is made up of prayer, *gives himself to prayer*, as the apostles, *Acts vi. 4*. When David's enemies falsely accused him and misrepresented him, he applied himself to God, and by prayer committed his cause to him. Though they were his adversaries for his love, yet he continued to pray for them; if others are abusive and injurious to us, yet let us not fail to do our duty to them, nor *sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for them*, 1 Sam. xii. 23. Though they hated and persecuted him for his religion, yet he kept close to it; they laughed at him for his devotion, but they could not laugh him out of it: let them say what they will, *I give myself unto prayer*. Now herein David was a type of Christ, who was compassed about with words of hatred, and lying words; whose enemies not only persecuted him without cause, but for his love, and his good works, John x. 32. and yet he gave himself to prayer, to pray for them, *Father, forgive them*.

6. Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand. 7. When he shall be judged, let him be condemned, and let his prayer become sin. 8. Let his days be few, and let another take his office. 9. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. 10. Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places. 11. Let the extortioner catch all that he hath: and let the stranger spoil his labour. 12. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children. 13. Let his posterity be cut off, and in the generation following let their name be blotted out. 14. Let the iniquity of his father be remembered with the LORD: and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. 15. Let them be before the LORD continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth. 16. Because that he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart. 17. As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. 18. As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment: so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. 19. Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually. 20. Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the LORD, and of them that speak evil against my soul.

David here fastens upon some one particular person that was worse than the rest of his enemies, and the ringleader of them, and in a devout and pious manner, not from a principle of malice and revenge, but in a holy zeal for God, and against sin, and with an eye to the enemies of Christ, particularly Judas who betrayed him, whose sin was greater than Pilate's that condemned him, John xix. 11. he imprecates and predicts his destruction, foresees and pronounces him compleatly miserable, and such a one as our Saviour calls him, *A son of perdition*. Calvin speaks of it as a detestable piece of sacrilege, common in his time among Franciscan Friars, and other Monks, that if any one had malice against a neighbour, he might hire some of them to curse him every day, which he would do in the words of these verses; and particularly he tells of a lady in France, that being at variance with her own and only son, she hired a parcel of friars to curse him in these words. And greater impiety can scarce be imagined, than to vent a devilish passion in the language of sacred writ; to kindle strife with coals snatched from God's altar, and to call for fire from heaven, with a tongue set on fire of hell.

1. The imprecations here are very terrible; wo, and a thousand woes to that man against whom God saith *Amen* to them: and they are all in full force against the implacable enemies and persecutors of God's church and people, that *will not repent, to give him glory*. It is here foretold, concerning this ill man,

(1.) That he should be cast and sentenced as a criminal, with all the dreadful pomp of a trial, conviction, and condemnation, ver. 6, 7. *Set thou a wicked man over him*, to be as cruel and oppressive to him, as he hath been to others; for God often makes one wicked man a scourge to another, to spoil the spoilers, and to deal treacherously with those that have dealt treacherously. *Set the wicked one over him*, so some; i. e. Satan, as it follows; and then it was fulfilled in Judas, into whom Satan entred, to hurry him

into sin first, and then into despair. Set his own wicked heart over him, set his own conscience against him, let that fly in his face: *Let Satan stand at his right hand*, and be let loose against him to deceive him, as he did Ahab to his destruction, and then to accuse him and resist him, and then he is certainly cast, having no interest in that advocate, who alone can say, *The Lord rebuke thee, Satan*, Zech. iii. 1, 2. when he shall be judged at meis bar let not his usual acts to evade justice do him any service, but let his sin find him out, and *let him be condemned*; nor shall he escape before God's tribunal, but be condemned there when the day of inquisition and recompence shall come. *Let his prayer become sin*, as the clamours of a condemned malefactor not only find no acceptance, but are looked upon as an affront to the court. The prayers of the wicked now become sin, because soured with the leaven of hypocrisy and malice; and so they will in the great day, because then it will be too late to cry, *Lord, Lord, open to us*. Let every thing be turned against him and improved to his disadvantage, even his prayers.

(2.) That being condemned he should be executed as a most notorious malefactor. 1. That he should lose his life, and the number of his months be cut off in the midst by the sword of justice: *Let his days be few*, or shortened; as a condemned criminal has but a few days to live, ver. 8. such bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days. 2. That consequently all his places should be disposed of to others, and they should enjoy his preferments and employments: *Let another take his office*. This St. Peter applies to the filling up of Judas's room in the truly sacred college of the apostles, by the choice of Matthias, *Acts i. 20*. Those that mismanage their trusts, will justly have their office taken from them, and given to those that will approve themselves faithful. 3. That his family should be beheaded and beggared; that *his wife* should be made a widow, and *his children fatherless*, by his untimely death, ver. 9. Wicked men, by their wicked courses, bring ruin upon their wives and children, whom they ought to take care of, and provide for. Yet his children, if, when they lost their father, they had a competency to live upon, they might do pretty well; but they shall be *vagabonds, and beg*, shall not have a house of their own to live in, nor any certain dwelling-place, nor know where to have a meals-meat, but shall creep out of their desolate places with fear and trembling, like beasts out of their dens, to seek their bread, ver. 10. because they are conscious to themselves what reason all mankind has to hate them for their father's sake. 4. That his estate should be ruined, as the estates of malefactors are confiscated, ver. 11. *Let the extortioner*, the officer, seize all that he hath, and let the stranger, that was nothing akin to his estate, spoil his labour; either for his crimes, or for his debts, John v. 4, 5. 5. That his posterity should be miserable. Fatherless children, though they have nothing of their own, yet sometimes are well provided for by the kindness of those whom God inclines to pity them; but this wicked man having never shewed mercy, *there shall be none to extend mercy to him*, by favouring his fatherless children, when he is gone, ver. 12. The children of wicked parents often fare the worse for their parents wickedness this way, that the bowels of mens compassion are shut up from them; which yet ought not to be; for why should children suffer for that which was not their fault, but their infelicity? 6. That his memory should be infamous, and buried in oblivion and disgrace, ver. 13. *Let his posterity be cut off*; let his end be to destruction, so Dr. Hammond; and in the next generation let their name be blotted out, or remembered with contempt and indignation, and, ver. 15. let an indelible mark of disgrace be left upon it.

See here what hurries some to shameful deaths, and brings the families and estates of others to ruin; makes them and theirs despicable and odious, and entails poverty and shame, and misery, upon their posterity; it is sin; that mischievous, destructive thing. The learned Dr. Hammond applies this to the final dispersion and desolation of the Jewish nation for their crucifying Christ: their princes and people were cut off, their country laid waste, their posterity made fugitives and vagabonds.

2. The ground of these imprecations speaks them very just, though they sound very severe.

(1.) To justify the imprecations of vengeance upon the sinner's posterity, the sin of his ancestors is here brought into the account, ver. 14, 15. *The iniquity of his fathers*, and *the sin of his mother*. These God often visits, even upon the children's children, and is not unrighteous therein: when wickedness has long run in the blood, justly doth the curse run along with it. Thus all the innocent blood that had been shed upon the earth from that of righteous Abel, was required from that persecuting generation, who, by putting Christ to death, filled up the measure of their fathers, and left as long a train of vengeance to follow them, as the train of guilt was that went before them, which they themselves agreed to, by saying, *His blood be upon us, and on our children*.

(2.) To justify the imprecations of vengeance upon the sinner himself, his own sin is here charged upon him, which called aloud for it.

1. He had loved cruelty, and therefore give him blood to drink, ver. 16. *He remembered not to shew mercy*, remembered not those considerations which would have induced him to shew mercy; remembered not the objects of compassion that had been presented to him;

him ; but persecuted the poor, whom he should have protected and relieved ; and *slew the broken in heart*, whom he should have comforted and healed. Here is a barbarous man indeed, not fit to live.

2. He had loved cursing ; and therefore let the curse come upon his head, *ver. 17, 18, 19.* Those that were out of the reach of his cruelty, he let fly at with his curses, which were impotent and ridiculous ; but they shall return upon him. *He delighted not in blessing*, i. e. he took no pleasure in wishing well to others, nor in seeing others do well ; he would give no body a good word, or a good wish, much less would he do any body a good turn ; and *so let all good be far from him.* *He clothed himself with cursing*, was proud of it as an ornament, that he could frighten all about him with the curses he was liberal of ; he confided in it as armour, which would secure him from the insults of those he feared. And let him have enough of it : Was he fond of cursing ? *Let God's curse come into his bowels like water*, and swell him as with a drop-sy, *and let it soak like oil into his bones.* The word of the curse is quick and powerful, and divides between the joints and the marrow : it works powerfully and effectually, it fastens on the soul ; it is a piercing thing, and there is no antidote against it. Let it compass him on every side *as a garment*, *ver. 19.* Let God's cursing him be his shame, as his cursing his neighbour was his pride ; let it cleave to him as a girdle, and let him never be able to get clear of it. Let it be to him like the waters of jealousy, which caused the belly to swell, and the thigh to rot. This points at the utter ruin of Judas, and the spiritual judgments which fell on the Jews for crucifying Christ. The psalmist concludes his imprecation with a terrible *Amen*, which signifies not only, I wish it may be so, but I know it shall be so ; *Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the Lord*, *ver. 20.* And this will be the reward of all the adversaries of the Lord Jesus ; his enemies that will not have him to reign over them, shall be *brought forth and slain before him.* And he will one day recompence tribulation to them that trouble his people.

21. But do thou for me, O God the LORD, for thy names sake : because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me. 22. For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me. 23. I am gone like the shadow, when it declineth : I am tossed up and down as the locust. 24. My knees are weak through fasting : and my flesh faileth of fatness. 25. I became also a reproach unto them : when they looked upon me, they shook their heads. 26. Help me, O LORD my God : O save me according to thy mercy : 27. That they may know, that this is thy hand : that thou, LORD, hast done it. 28. Let them curse, but bless thou : when they arise, let them be ashamed : but let thy servant rejoice. 29. Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame : and let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a mantle. 30. I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth : yea, I will praise him among the multitude. 31. For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul.

David having denounced God's wrath against his enemies, here takes God's comforts to himself, but in a very humble manner, and without boasting.

1. He pours out his complaint before God concerning the low condition he was in, which, it is probable, gave advantage to his enemies to insult over him : *I am poor and needy*, and therefore a proper object of pity, and one that needs and craves thy help. (1.) He was troubled in mind, *ver. 22. My heart is wounded within me* ; not only broken with outward troubles, which sometimes prostrate and sink the spirits, but wounded with sense of guilt ; and *a wounded spirit who can bear ?* who can heal ? (2.) He apprehended himself drawing near to his end ; *I am gone like the shadow, when it declineth* ; as good as gone already. Man's life at best is like a shadow, sometimes it is like the evening shadow, the preface of night approaching, *like the shadow when it declines.* (3.) He was unsettled ; *tossed up and down like the locust* ; his mind fluctuating and unsteady, still putting him upon new counsels ; his outward condition far from any fixation, but still upon the remove, hunted like a partridge on the mountains. (4.) His body was wasted, and almost worn away, *ver. 24. My knees are weak through fasting* ; either forced fasting, for want of food when he was persecuted, or for want of appetite when he was sick ; or voluntary fasting, when he chastised his soul either for sin, or affliction, his own or others, *Psal. xxxv. 13. lxix. 10. My flesh faileth of fatness*, i. e. it has lost the fatness it had, so that I am become a skeleton, nothing but skin and bones : but better have this leanness in the body while the soul prospers and is in health, than, like Israel, have leanness sent into the soul while the body is feasted. (5.) He was ridiculed and reproached by his enemies, *ver. 25.* his devotions, and his afflictions, they made the matter of their laugh-

ter ; and, upon both those accounts, God's people have been exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease. In all this, David was a type of Christ, who, in his humiliation, was thus wounded, thus weakened, thus reproached : he was also a type of the church, which is often *afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted.*

2. He prays for mercy for himself ; in general, *ver. 21. Do thou for me, O God the Lord* ; appear for me, act for me : If God be for us, he will do for us, will do *more abundantly for us than we are able either to ask or think.* He doth not prescribe to God what he should do for him, but refers himself to his wisdom ; Lord, do for me, what seemeth good in thine eyes. Do that which thou knowest will be for me, really for me, in the issue for me, though for the present it may seem to make against me. More particularly, he prays, *ver. 26. Help me, O Lord my God, O save me.* Help me under my trouble, save me out of my trouble : save me from sin, help me to do my duty. He prays, *ver. 28. Though they curse, bless thou.* Here, 1. He despiseth the causeless curses of his enemies ; *let them curse.* He said of Shimei, *so let him curse.* They can but shew their malice ; they can do him no more mischief than *the bird by wandering, or the swallow by flying*, *Prov. xxvi. 2.* (2.) He values the blessing of God as sufficient to balance their curses ; *bless thou*, and then it is no matter though they curse. If God bless us, we need not care who curseth us ; for *how can they curse whom God hath not cursed ?* nay, whom he hath blessed, *Numb. xxiii. 8.* Mens curses are impotent, God's blessings are omnipotent. And those whom we unjustly curse, may in faith expect, and pray for God's blessing, his special blessing. When the Pharisees cast out the poor man for confessing Christ, Christ found him, *John ix. 35.* When men, without cause, say all the ill they can of us, and wish all the ills they can to us, we may with comfort lift up our heart to God in this petition ; *Let them curse, but bless thou.* He prays, *ver. 28. Let thy servant rejoice.* They that know how to value God's blessing, let them but be sure of it, and they will be glad of it.

3. He prays that his enemies might be ashamed, *ver. 28. clothed with shame*, *ver. 29.* and that they might cover themselves with their own confusion. That they might be left to themselves to do that which would expose them, and manifest their folly before all men : or rather, that they might be disappointed in their designs and enterprizes against David, and thereby might be filled with shame, as the adversaries of the Jews were, *Neh. vi. 16.* Nay, in this, he prays that they might be brought to repentance, which is the chief thing we should beg of God for our enemies : sinners indeed bring shame upon themselves, but they are true penitents that take shame to themselves, and cover themselves with their own confusion.

4. He pleads God's glory, the honour of his name ; *Do for me, for thy name's sake*, *ver. 21.* especially the honour of his goodness, by which he hath proclaimed his name ; *Deliver me, because thy mercy is good*, i. e. it is what thou thy self doth delight in, and it is what I do depend upon. Save me, not according to my merit, for I have none to pretend to, but according to thy mercy ; let that be the fountain, the reason, the measure of my salvation.

Lastly, He concludes the psalm with joy, the joy of faith ; joy in assurance that his present conflicts would end in triumphs. 1. He promiseth God that he will praise him, *ver. 30. I will greatly praise the Lord*, not only with my heart, but with my mouth, *I will praise him* ; not in secret only, but among the multitude. 2. He promiseth himself that he shall have cause to praise God, *ver. 31. He shall stand at the right hand of the poor*, nigh to him, a present help : he shall stand at his right hand, as his patron and advocate, to plead his cause against his accusers, and to bring him off ; *to save him from those that condemn his soul*, and would execute it if they could. God was David's protector in his sufferings, and was present also with the Lord Jesus in his, *stood at his right hand*, so that he was not moved, *Psal. xvi. 8.* saved his soul from those that pretended to be the judges of it, and received it into his own hands. Let all those that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him.

P S A L M CX.

This psalm is pure gospel ; it is only and wholly concerning Christ, the Messiah, promised to the fathers, and expected by them ; it is plain the Jews of old, even the worst of them, so understood it, however the modern Jews have endeavoured to pervert it, and to rob us of it ; for when the Lord Jesus proposed a question to the Pharisees upon the first words of this psalm, where he takes it for granted that David in spirit calls Christ his Lord, though he were his son, they chose rather to say nothing, and to own themselves graverled, than to make it a question, whether David doth indeed speak of the Messiah, or no ; for they freely yield so plain a truth, though they foresee it will turn to their own disgrace, *Matt. xxii. 41, &c.* Of him therefore, no doubt, the prophet here speaks, of him, and of no other man. Christ, as our Redeemer, executes the office of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king, both in his state of humiliation and exaltation ; and of each of these we have here an account. 1. His prophetic office, *ver. 2.* 2. His priestly office,

ver. 4. 3. *His kingly office*, ver. 1, 3, 5, 6. 4. *His estates of humiliation and exaltation*, ver. 7. *In singing this psalm we must act faith upon Christ, submit our selves entirely to him, to his grace and government, and triumph in him as our prophet, priest and king, by whom we hope to be ruled and taught, and saved for ever; and as the prophet, priest and king, of the whole church, who shall reign till he has put down all opposing rule, principality and power, and delivered up the kingdom to God the Father.*

¶ A psalm of David.

1. **T**HE LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. 2. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. 3. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. 4. The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.

Some have called this psalm David's creed, almost all the articles of the christian faith being found in it: the title calls it David's psalm: for in the believing foresight of the Messiah, he both praised God, and solaced himself; much more may we in singing of it, to whom that is fulfilled, and therefore more clearly revealed, which is here foretold.

Glorious things are here spoken of Christ, and such as oblige us to consider how great he is.

1. He is David's Lord; we must take special notice of this, because he himself doth, *Matt. xxiv. 44. David in spirit calleth him Lord.* And as the apostle proves the dignity of Melchizedek, and in him of Christ, by this, that so great a man as Abraham was, paid him *tithes*, Heb. vii. 4. so we may with this prove the dignity of the Lord Jesus, that David, that great man, called him his Lord: by him that king acknowledges himself to reign, and to him to be acceptable as a servant to his lord. Some think he calls him his Lord, because he was the Lord that was to descend from him. His son, and yet his Lord. Thus his immediate mother calls him her *Saviour*, Luke vii. 47. even his parents were his subjects, his saved ones.

2. He is constituted a sovereign Lord by the counsel and decree of God himself: *The Lord, Jehovah, said unto him, Sit as a king. He receives of the Father this honour and glory*, 2 *Pet. i. 17.* from him who is the fountain of honour and power, and takes it not to himself. He is therefore rightful Lord, and his title is uncontestable; for what God hath said, cannot be gainsaid. He is therefore everlasting Lord; for what God hath said, shall not be unsaid. He will certainly take, and keep possession of that kingdom which the Father has committed to him, and none can hinder.

3. He was to be advanced to the highest honour, and intrusted with an absolute sovereign power both in heaven and in earth. *Sit thou at my right hand.* Sitting is a resting posture: after his services and sufferings he entred into rest from all his labours. It is a ruling posture; sit to give law, to give judgment: it is a remaining posture; he sits like a king for ever: sitting at the right hand of God, notes both his dignity and his dominion; the honour put upon him, and the trusts reposed in him by the Father. All the favours that come from God to man, and all the service that comes from man to God, passeth through his hand.

4. All his enemies were in due time to be made his footstool, and not till then; but then also he must reign in the glory of the Mediator, though the work of the Mediator will be much at an end. Note, 1. Even Christ himself has enemies that fight against his kingdom and subjects, his honour and interest, in the world: there are those that will not have him to reign over them, and thereby they join themselves to Satan, who will not have him to reign at all.

2. These enemies will be made his footstool; he will subdue them, and triumph over them; he will do it easily, as easily as we put a footstool in its proper place; and such a decorum there will be in it; he will make himself easy by the doing of it, as a man that sits with a footstool under his feet; he will subdue them in such a way, as shall be most for his honour, and their perpetual disgrace; he will tread down the wicked, *Mal. iv. 3.* 3. God the Father has undertaken to do it; *I will make them thy footstool*, who can do it. 4. It will not be done presently. All his enemies are now in a chain, but not yet made his footstool: this the apostle observes, *Heb. ii. 8. We see not yet all things put under him.* Christ himself must wait for the compleating of his victories and triumphs.

5. He shall reign till it is done; and all their might and malice shall not give the least disturbance to his government. His setting at God's right hand is a pledge to him of his setting his feet at last on the necks of all his enemies.

5. That he should have a kingdom set up in the world, beginning at Jerusalem, ver. 2. *The Lord shall send the rod or sceptre of thy strength out of Zion*, by which thy kingdom shall be erected, maintained, and administered. The Messiah, when he sits on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, will have a church on earth, and will have an eye to it; for he is *King upon the holy hill*

of Zion, Psalm ii. 6. in opposition to mount Sinai, that frightful mountain, on which the law was given, *Heb. xii. 18, 24. Gal. iv. 24, 25.* The kingdom of Christ took rise from Zion, the city of David, for he was the son of David, and was to have the throne of his father David. By the rod of his strength, or his strong rod, is meant his everlasting gospel, and the power of the holy Ghost going along with it: the report of the word, and the arm of the Lord accompanying it, *Isa. liii. 1. Rom. i. 16.* the gospel coming both in word and in power, and in the holy Ghost, 1 *Theff. i. 5.* By the word and Spirit of God souls were to be reduced first, and brought into obedience to God, and then ruled and governed according to the will of God. This strong rod God sent forth, he poured out the Spirit, and gave both commissions and qualifications to them that preached the word, and ministered the Spirit, *Gal. iii. 5.* It was sent out of Zion, for there the Spirit was given, and there the preaching of the gospel among all nations must begin at Jerusalem. See *Luke xxiv. 47, 49.* Out of Zion must go forth the law of faith, *Isa. ii. 3.* Note, The gospel of Christ, being sent of God, is mighty, through God to do wonders, 2 *Cor. x. 4.* It is the rod of Christ's strength. Some make it to allude not only to the sceptre of a prince, noting the glory of Christ shining in the gospel, but to a shepherd's-crook, his rod and staff noting the tender care Christ takes of his church; for he is both the great and good shepherd.

6. That his kingdom being set up, shall be maintained and kept up in the world, in despite of all the oppositions of the power of darkness. 1. Christ shall rule, shall give laws, and govern his subjects by them; shall perfect them, and make them easy and happy; shall do his own will, fulfil his own counsels, and maintain his own interests among men. His kingdom is of God, and it shall stand; his crown sits fast on his head, and there it shall flourish. 2. He shall rule in the midst of his enemies. He sits in heaven in the midst of his friends; his throne of glory there is surrounded with none but faithful worshippers of him, *Rev. v. 11.* But he rules on earth in the midst of his enemies, and his throne of government here is surrounded with those that hate him, and fight against him. Christ's church is a lily among thorns, and his disciples are sent forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: He knows where they dwell, even where Satan's seat is, *Rev. ii. 13.* and this redounds to his honour, that he not only keeps his ground, but gains his point, maugre all the malignant policies and powers of hell and earth, which cannot shake the rock on which the church is built. *Great is the truth and will prevail.*

7. That he should have a great number of subjects that should be to him for a name and a praise, ver. 3.

(1.) That they should be his own people, and such as he should have an uncontestable title to. They are given to him by the Father, who gave them their lives and beings, and to whom their lives and beings were forfeited: *Thine they were, and thou gavest them me*, *John xvii. 6.* They are redeemed by him; he has purchased them to be to himself a peculiar people, *Tit. ii. 14.* They are his by right, antecedent to their consent; he had much people in *Corinth*, before they were converted, *Acts xviii. 10.*

(2.) That they should be a willing people, a people of willingness; alluding to servants that choose their service, and are not captivated to it; they love their masters, and would not go out free: to soldiers that are volunteers, and not pressed men; Here am I, send me: to sacrifices that are free-will offerings, and not offered of necessity; we present our selves living sacrifices. Note, Christ's people are a willing people. The conversion of a soul consists in its being willing to be Christ's, coming under his yoke, and into his interests, with an entire compliancy and satisfaction.

(3.) That they should be so in the day of his power. In the day of thy muster, so some; when thou art lifting soldiers, thou shalt find a multitude of volunteers forward to be lifted; let but the standard be set up, and the Gentiles will seek to it, *Isa. xi. 10. lx. 3.* Or, when thou art drawing them out to battle, they shall be willing to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes, *Rev. xiv. 4.* In the day of thine armies, so some; when the first preachers of the gospel were sent forth, as Christ's armies, to reduce apostate men, and to ruin the kingdom of apostate angels, then all that are thy people shall be willing; that will be thy time of setting up thy kingdom. In the day of thy strength, so we take it. There is a general power which goes along with the gospel to all, proper to make them willing to be Christ's people, arising from the supream authority of its great author, and the intrinsic excellency of the things themselves contained in it, besides the undeniable miracles that were wrought for the confirmation of it. And there is also a particular power, the power of the Spirit, going along with the power of the word, to the people of Christ, which is effectual to make them willing. The former leaves sinners without matter of excuse, this leaves saints without matter of boasting. Whoever are willing to be Christ's people, it is the free and mighty grace of God that makes them so.

(4.) That they should be so in the beauty of holiness; that is, 1. They shall be allured to him by the beauty of holiness; they shall be charmed into a subjection to Christ, by the sight given them of his beauty, who is the holy Jesus, and the beauty of the church, which is the holy nation. 2. They shall be admitted by him into the beauty of holiness, as spiritual priests, to minister in his

his sanctuary; for *by the blood of Jesus we have boldness to enter into the holiest*. 3. They shall attend upon him in the beautiful attire, or ornaments, of grace and sanctification. Note, Holiness is the livery of Christ's family, and that which *becomes his house for ever*. Christ's soldiers are all thus clothed; these are the colours they wear: the armies of heaven *follow him in fine linen, clean and white*, Rev. xix. 14.

(5.) That he should have great numbers of people devoted to him; the multitude of the people is the honour of the prince, and that shall be the honour of this prince: *From the womb of the morning, thou hast the dew of thy youth*, i. e. abundance of young converts, like the drops of dew in a summer's morning. In the early days of the gospel, in the morning of the New Testament, the youth of the church, great numbers flocked to Christ, and there were *multitudes that believed*; a remnant of Jacob, that was as a dew from the Lord, Mic. v. 7. Isa. lxiv. 4, 8. Or thus, *From the womb of the morning*, i. e. from their very childhood, *thou hast the dew of thy peoples youth*; i. e. their hearts and affections when they are young; it is thy youth, because it is dedicated to thee: *The dew of the youth* is a numerous, illustrious, hopeful shew of young peoples flocking to Christ, which should be to the world as dew to the ground, to make it fruitful. Note, The dew of our youth, even in the morning of our days, ought to be consecrated to our Lord Jesus.

(6.) That he should be not only a king, but a priest, ver. 4. The same Lord that said, *Sit thou at my right hand, swear, and will not repent, Thou art a priest*, i. e. be thou a priest; for by the word of this oath he was consecrated. Note, 1. Our Lord Jesus Christ is a priest; he was appointed to that office, and faithfully executes it; he is *ordained for men in things pertaining to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin*, Heb. v. 1. to make atonement for our sins, and to recommend our services to God's acceptance: He is God's minister to us, and our advocate with God, and so is a Mediator between us and God. 2. He is a priest for ever: he was designed for a priest in God's eternal counsels; he was a priest to the Old Testament saints, and will be a priest for all believers to the end of time, Heb. xiii. 8. He is said to be a priest for ever, not only because we are never to expect any other dispensation of grace but this, by the priesthood of Christ, but because the blessed fruits and consequences of it will remain to eternity. 3. He is made a priest with an oath, which the apostle urgeth, to prove the pre-eminence of his priesthood above that of Aaron, Heb. vii. 20, 21. *The Lord hath sworn*, to shew that in the commission there was no implicit reserve of a power of revocation, for *he will not repent*, as he did concerning Eli's priesthood, 1 Sam. ii. 30. This was intended for the honour of Christ, and the comfort of christians: the priesthood of Christ is confirmed by the highest ratifications possible, that it may be an unshaken foundation for our faith and hope to build upon. 4. He is a priest, not of the order of Aaron, but that of Melchizedek, which, as it was prior, so it was, upon many accounts, superior to that of Aaron, and a more lively representation of Christ's priesthood; Melchizedek was a priest upon his throne, so is Christ, Zech. vi. 13. king of righteousness, and king of peace: Melchizedek had no successor, nor hath Christ, his is an unchangeable priesthood. The apostle comments largely upon these words, Heb. vii. and builds on them his discourse of Christ's priestly office; which he shews was no new notion, but built upon this most sure word of prophecy. For as the New Testament explains the Old, so the Old Testament confirms the New, and Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega of both.

5. The LORD at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. 6. He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies: he shall wound the heads over many countries. 7. He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.

Here we have our great Redeemer,

1. Conquering his enemies, ver. 5, 6. in order to the making them his footstool, ver. 1. Our Lord Jesus will certainly bring to nought all the opposition made to his kingdom, and bring to ruin all those who make that opposition; and persist in it. He will be too hard for those, whoever they be, that fight against him, against his subjects, and the interests of his kingdom, among men, either by persecutions, or by perverse disputings. Observe here,

(1.) The conqueror: *The Lord; Adonai*; the Lord Jesus, he to whom all judgment is committed, he shall make his own part good against his enemies: *The Lord at thy right hand, O church*, so some; i. e. the Lord that is nigh unto his people, and a very present help to them, that is at their right hand, to strengthen and succour them, shall appear for them against his and their enemies. See Psalm cix. 31. *He shall stand at the right hand of the poor*. Psalm xvi. 8. Some observe, that when Christ is said to do his work at the right hand of his church, it intimates, that if we would have Christ to appear for us, we must *bestir our selves*, 2 Sam. v. 24. Or rather, *At thy right hand, O God*, referring to ver. 1. in the dignity and dominion to which he is advanced. Note, Christ's sitting at the right hand of God speaks as much terror to his enemies, as happiness to his people.

(2.) The time fixed for this victory. *In the day of his wrath*, i. e. The time appointed for it. When the measure of their iniquities is full, and they are ripe for ruin. When the day of his patience is expired, then the day of his wrath comes. Note, 1. Christ has wrath of his own, as well as grace. It concerns us to *kiss the Son*, for he can be angry, Psal. ii. 12. And we read of the *wrath of the Lamb*, Rev. vi. 16. 2. There is a day of wrath set, a year of recompence for the controversy of Zion, the year of the redeemed. The time is set for the destruction of particular enemies, and when that time is come it shall be done, how unlikely soever it may seem; but the great day of his wrath will be at the end of time, Rev. vi. 17.

(3.) The extent of this victory. 1. It shall return very high: *He shall strike through kings*. The greatest of men that set themselves against Christ shall be made to fall before him, though they be kings of the earth, and rulers that use to carry their point, they cannot carry it against Christ, they do but make themselves ridiculous by the attempt, Psal. ii. 1. 5. Be their power among men never so despotick, Christ will call them to an account; be their strength never so great, their policies never so deep, Christ will be too hard for them, and above them, wherein they deal proudly. Satan is the prince of this world, Death the king of terrors, and we read of kings that make war with the lamb; but they shall all be brought down and broken. 2. It shall reach very far. The trophies of Christ's victories will be set up among the heathen, and in many countries wherever any of his enemies are, not his eye only, but his hand shall find them out, Psal. xxi. 8. and his wrath shall follow them. He will plead with all nations, Joel iii. 2.

(4.) The equity of this victory: *He shall judge among them*. It is not a military execution which is done in fury, but a judicial one; before he condemns and slays he will judge, i. e. he will make it to appear, that they have brought this ruin upon themselves, and have themselves rolled the stone which returns upon them, that he may be justified when he speaks, and the heavens may declare his righteousness. See Rev. xix. 1, 2.

(5.) The effect of this victory; it shall be the compleat and utter ruin of all his enemies: He shall strike them through, for he strikes home, and gives an incurable wound; he shall wound the heads, which seems to refer to the first promise of the Messiah, Gen. iii. 1. that he should bruise the serpent's head. He shall wound the head of his enemies, Psal. lxviii. 21. some read it, *He shall wound him* that is the head over many countries; either Satan or Antichrist, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of his mouth. He shall make such destruction of his enemies, that he shall fill the places with the dead bodies. The slain of the Lord shall be many. See Isa. xxxiv. 3, &c. Ezek. xxxix. 12, 14. Rev. xiv. 20. — xix. 17. The filling of the valleys, (for so some read it) with dead bodies, perhaps, notes the filling of hell (which is sometimes compared to the valley of Hinnom, Isa. xxx. 33. Jer. vii. 32.) with damned souls, for that will be the portion of those that persist in their enmity to Christ.

2. We have here the Redeemer saving his friends and comforting them, ver. 7. for their benefit,

1. He shall be humbled. *He shall drink of the brook in the way*, i. e. that bitter cup which the Father put into his hand. He shall be so abased and impoverished, and withal so intent upon his work, that he shall drink puddle water out of the lakes in the highway; (so some). The wrath of God running in the channel of the curse of the law, was the brook in the way, in the way of his undertaking, which he must go through with; or, which run in the way of our salvation and obstructed it, which lay between us and heaven; Christ drank of this brook, when he was made a curse for us, and therefore when he entered upon his suffering, he went over the brook Kidron, John xviii. 1. he drank deep of this black brook (so Kidron signifies) this bloody brook, so drank of the brook in the way, as to take it out of the way of our redemption and salvation.

2. He shall be exalted: *Therefore shall he lift up the head*. When he died he bowed the head, John xix. 30. but he soon lifted up the head by his own power in his resurrection. He lift up the head as a conqueror, yea more than a conqueror. This notes not only his exaltation, but his exultation; not only his elevation, but his triumph in it, Col. ii. 15. *Having spoiled principalities and powers he made a shew of them*. David spoke as a type of him in this, Psal. xxvi. 6. *Now shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies*. His exaltation was the reward of his humiliation; because he humbled himself, therefore God also has highly exalted him, Phil. ii. 9. Because he drank of the brook in the way, therefore he lifted up his own head, and so lifted up the heads of all his faithful followers, who, if they suffer with him, shall also reign with him.

P S A L M CXI.

This, and divers of the psalms that follow it, seem to have been penned by David for the service of the church in their solemn feasts, and not upon any particular occasion. This is a psalm of praise, the title of it is Hallelujah, Praise ye the Lord; intimating, that we must address ourselves to the use of this psalm, with hearts disposed to praise God. It is composed alphabetically, each sentence beginning with a several letter of the Hebrew alphabet, in order exactly, and two sentences to each verse, and three a-piece to the two last. The

The psalmist exhorting to praise God, (1.) Sets himself for an example, ver. 1. (2.) Furnishes us with matter for praise from the works of God. 1. The greatness of his works, and the glory of them. 2. The righteousness of them. 3. The goodness of them. 4. The power of them. 5. The conformity of them to his word of promise. 6. The perpetuity of them. These observations are intermixed, ver. 2,—9. (3.) He recommends the holy fear of God, and a conscientious obedience to his commands, as the most acceptable way of praising God, ver. 10.

1. **P**Raise ye the LORD. I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation. 2. The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. 3. His work is honourable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever. 4. He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD is gracious and full of compassion. 5. He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant.

The title of the psalm being *Hallelujah*, the psalmist (as every author ought to have) has an eye to his title, and keeps to his text.

1. He resolves to praise God himself, ver. 1. What duty we call others to we must oblige and excite ourselves to; nay, whatever others do, whether they will praise God or no, we and our houses must determine to do it, we and our hearts; for such is the psalmist's resolution here, *I will praise the Lord with my whole heart*. My heart, my whole heart being devoted to his honour shall be employed in this work: and this in the assembly, or secret, of the upright, in the cabinet-council, and in the congregation of Israelites. Note, We must praise God both in private and in publick, in lesser and greater assemblies, in our own families, and in the courts of the Lord's house; but in both it is most comfortable to do it in consort of the upright, who will heartily join in it. Private meetings for devotion should be kept up, as well as more publick and promiscuous assemblies.

2. He recommends to us the works of the Lord, as the proper subject of our meditations when we are praising him, the dispensations of his providence both towards the world, and towards the church, and particular persons.

1. God's works are very magnificent; great, like himself, there is nothing in them that is mean or trifling: they are the products of infinite wisdom and power, and we must say this upon the first view of them, before we come to enquire more particularly into them, that *the works of the Lord are great*, ver. 2. There is something in them surprizing and that strikes an awe upon us. All the works of the Lord are spoken of as one, ver. 3. it is his work, such is the beauty and harmony of providence, and so admirably do all its dispensations centre in one design; it was cried to the wheels, *O wheel*, Ezek. x. 13. Take all together and it is honourable and glorious, and such as becomes him.

2. They are entertaining and exercising to the inquisitive. They are sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. Note,

1. All that truly love God have pleasure in his works, and reckon all well that he doth; nor do their thoughts dwell upon any subject with more delight than on the works of God, which, the more they are looked into, the more they give us of a pleasing surprize.

2. They that have pleasure in the works of God will not take up with a superficial transient view of them, but will diligently search into them and observe them. In studying both natural and political history we should have this in our eye, to discover the greatness and glory of God's works. 3. These works of God that are humbly and diligently sought into, shall be sought out; they that seek shall find (so some read it) found of all them that have pleasure in them, or found in all their parts, designs, purposes, and several concerns, (so Dr. Hammond) for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, Psal. xxv. 14.

3. They are all just and holy. His righteousness endureth for ever. Whatever he doth, he never did, nor never will do any wrong to any of his creatures; and therefore his works endure for ever, Eccl. iii. 14. because the righteousness of them doth so.

4. They are admirable and memorable, fit to be registred and kept on record. Much that we do is so trifling, that it is not fit to be spoken of, or told again; the greatest kindness is to forget it; but notice is to be taken of God's works, and an account to be kept of them, ver. 4. He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered, i. e. He hath done that which is worthy to be remembered, which cannot but be remembered; and he hath instituted ways and means for the keeping of some of them in remembrance, as the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt by the passover, He hath made him a memorial by his wonderful works; so some read it: see Isa. lxiii. 10. by that which God did with his glorious arm, he made himself an everlasting name.

5. They are kind: in them the Lord shews that he is gracious and full of compassion. As of the works of creation, so of the works of providence, we must say, they are not only all very great, but all very good. Dr. Hammond takes this to be the name which

God has made to himself by his wonderful works, the same with that which he proclaimed to Moses, *The Lord God is gracious and merciful*, Exod. xxiv. 6. God's pardoning sin is the most wonderful of all his works, and which ought to be remembered to his glory. It is a further instance of his grace and compassion, that he hath given meat to them that fear him, ver. 5. He gives them their daily bread, food convenient for them; so he doth to others by common providence, but to them that fear him he gives it by covenant, and in pursuance of the promise; for it follows, *he will be ever mindful of his covenant*; so that they can taste covenant-love even in common mercies. Some refer this to the manna with which God fed his people Israel in the wilderness. Others to the spoil they got from the Egyptians when they came out with great substance, according to the promise, Gen. xv. 14. When God brake the heads of leviathan he gave him to be meat to his people, Psal. lxxiv. 14. He hath given prey to them that fear him; so the margin has it, not only fed them but enriched them, and given their enemies to be a prey to them.

6. They are earnest of what he will do according to his promise: *He will ever be mindful of his covenant*, for he has ever been so; as he never did, so he never will, let one jot or tittle of it fall to the ground. Though God's people have their infirmities, and are often unmindful of his commands, yet he will be ever mindful of his covenant.

6. He hath shewed his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen. 7. The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. 8. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness. 9. He sent redemption unto his people, he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name. 10. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.

We are here taught to give glory to God,

1. For the great things he has done for his people, for his people Israel of old, and of late: *He hath shewed his people the power of his works*, ver. 6. in what he hath wrought for them, many a time he hath given proofs of his omnipotence, and shewed them what he can do, and that there is nothing too hard for him to do. Two things are instanced in, to shew the power of his works.

(1.) The possession God gave to Israel in the land of Canaan, that he might give them, or, in giving them the heritage of the heathen. This he did in Joshua's time when the seven nations were subdued; and in David's time, when the neighbouring nations were many of them brought into subjection to Israel, and became tributaries to David. Herein God shewed his sovereignty, in disposing kingdoms as he pleaseth, and his might in making good his disposals. If God will make the heritage of the heathen to be the heritage of Israel, who can either arraign his counsel, or stay his hand?

(2.) The many deliverances which he wrought for his people, when by their iniquities they had sold themselves into the hand of their enemies, ver. 9. *He sent redemption unto his people*; not only out of Egypt at first, but often afterwards: and these redemptions were typical of the great redemption, which in the fulness of time was to be wrought out by the Lord Jesus, that redemption in Jerusalem which so many waited for.

2. For the stability both of his word and of his works, which assure us of the great things he will do for them.

(1.) What God hath done, shall never be undone. He will not undo it himself, and men and devils cannot, ver. 7. *The works of his hand are verity and judgment*, i. e. ver. 8. they are done in truth and uprightness; all he doth is consonant to the eternal rules and reasons of equity, all according to the counsel of his wisdom, and the purpose of his will; all well done; and therefore there is nothing in them to be altered or amended, but they are firm and unchangeable. Upon the beginning of his works, we may depend for the perfecting of them; work that is done true will last, will neither go to decay, nor sink under the stress that is laid upon it.

(2.) What God hath said, shall never be unsaid; all his commandments are sure; all straight, and therefore all steady. His purposes, the rule of his actions, shall all have their accomplishment; *Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?* No doubt he shall; whether he commands light or darkness, it is done as he commands. His precepts, the rule of our actions, are unquestionably just and good, and therefore unchangeable, and not to be repealed. His promises and threatnings are all sure, and will be made good; nor shall the unbelief of man make either the one or the other of none effect. They are established, and therefore they stand fast for ever and ever, and the scripture cannot be broken. The wise God is never put upon new counsels, nor obliged to take new measures, either in his laws or in his providences. All is said, as all is done, in truth and uprightness, and therefore it is immutable. Mens folly and falshood make them unstable in all their ways, but infinite wisdom

wisdom and truth for ever exclude retraction and revocation. *He has commanded his covenant for ever.*—God's covenant is commanded, for he has made it as one that hath an uncontestable authority to prescribe both what we must do, and what we must expect, and an unquestionable ability to perform both what he has promised in the blessings of the covenant, and what he has threatened in the curses of it, *Psal. cv. 8.*

3. For the setting up and establishing of religion among men. Because *holy and reverend is his name, and the fear of him is the beginning of wisdom, therefore his praise endureth for ever, i. e. he is to be everlastingly praised.*

(1.) Because the discoveries of religion tend so much to his honour. Review what he has made known of himself in his word and in his works, and you will see, and say, that God is great, and greatly to be feared; for his name is holy, his infinite purity and rectitude appears in all that whereby he has made himself known, and because it is holy, therefore it is reverend, and to be thought of, and mentioned with a holy awe. Note, What is holy is reverend; the angels have an eye to God's holiness when they cover their faces before him, and nothing is more man's honour than his sanctification. It is in his holy places that God appears most terrible, *Psal. lxviii. ult. Lev. x. 3.*

(2.) Because the dictates of religion tend so much to man's happiness. We have reason to praise God, that the matter is so well contrived, that our reverence of him, and obedience to him, is as much our interest as it is our duty.

1. Our reverence of him is so: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.* It is not only reasonable it self that we should fear God, because his name is reverend, and his nature holy, but it is advantageous to us. It is wisdom, it will direct us to speak and act as becomes us, in a consistency with our selves, and for our own benefit. It is the head of wisdom, *i. e.* as we read it, it is *the beginning of wisdom*; men never begin to be wise, till they begin to fear God; all true wisdom takes its rise from true religion, and has its foundation in it: or, as some understand it, it is the chief wisdom, and the most excellent; the first in dignity. It is the principal wisdom, and the principle of wisdom, to worship God, and give honour to him, as our Father and Master. They manage well that always act under the government of his holy fear.

2. Our obedience to him is so: *A good understanding have all they that do his commandments.* Where the fear of the Lord rules in the heart, there will be a constant conscientious care to keep his commandments; not to talk of them, but to do them; and such have a good understanding; *i. e.* 1. They are well understood, their obedience is graciously accepted as a plain indication of their mind, that they do indeed fear God: Compare *Prov. iii.—So shalt thou find favour and good understanding.* God and man will look upon such as meaning well, and approve of them, who make conscience of their duty, though they have their mistakes; what is honestly intended shall be well taken. 2. They understand well.

(1.) It is a sign they do understand well. The most obedient are accepted as the most intelligent; those understand themselves and their interest best, that make God's law their rule, and are in every thing ruled by it. A great understanding they have that know God's commandments, and can discourse learnedly of them; but a good understanding have they that do them, and walk according to them. (2.) It is the way to understand better. *A good understanding are they to all that do them, i. e. the fear of the Lord, and the laws of that give men a good understanding, and are able to make them wise unto salvation.* If any man will do his will, he shall know more and more clearly of the doctrine of Christ, *Jahn vii. 17.* Good success have all they that do them, so the margin; according to what was promised Joshua, if he would observe to do according to the law, *Jesh. i. 8.* Then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and shalt have good success. We have reason to praise God, to praise him for ever, for putting man into such a fair way to happiness. Some apply the last words rather to the good man who fears the Lord, than to the good God: *His praise endures for ever; it is not of men, perhaps, but it is of God, Rom. ii. 29.* and that praise which is of God endures for ever, when the praise of men is withered and gone.

P S A L M CXII.

This psalm is composed alphabetically as the former is, and is (like the former) entitled, Hallelujah; though it treats of the happiness of the saints, because it redounds to the glory of God; and whatever we have the pleasure of, he must have the praise of. It is a comment upon the last verse of the foregoing psalm, and fully shews, how much it is our wisdom to fear God, and do his commandments. We have here, (1.) The character of the righteous, ver. 1. (2.) The blessedness of the righteous. (1.) There is a blessing entailed on their posterity, ver. 2. (2.) There is a blessing conferred upon themselves. 1. Prosperity, outward and inward, ver. 3. 2. Comfort, ver. 4. 3. Wisdom, ver. 5. 4. Stability, ver. 6, 7, 8. 5. Honour, ver. 6, 9. (3.) The misery of the wicked, ver. 10. So that here is good and evil set before us, the blessing and the curse. In singing this psalm, we must not only teach and admonish our selves and one another to answer the characters here given of

the happy, but comfort and encourage our selves, and one another, with the privileges and comforts here secured to the holy.

1. Praise ye the LORD. Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. 2. His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed. 3. Wealth and riches shall be in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever. 4. Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous. 5. A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth; he will guide his affairs with discretion.

The psalmist begins with a call to us to praise God, but immediately applies himself to praise the people of God; for whatever glory is acknowledged to be on them, it comes from God, and must return to him: as he is their praise, so they are his. We have reason to praise the Lord, that there is a people in the world that fear him and serve him, and that they are a happy people; both which are owing entirely to the grace of God.

Now here we have,

1. A description of those who are here pronounced blessed, and to whom these promises are made.

(1.) They are well principled with pious and devout affections. Those have the privileges of God's subjects, not that cry, Lord, Lord, but are indeed well affected to his government. 1. They are such as stand in awe of God, and have a constant reverence for his majesty, and deference to his will. The happy man is he that feareth the Lord, ver. 1. 2. They are such as take a pleasure in their duty. He that feareth the Lord, as a father, with the disposition of a child, not of a slave, *delighteth greatly in his commandments*; is well pleased with them, and with the equity and goodness of them, they are written in his heart, it is his choice to be under them, and he calls them an easy, a pleasant yoke; it is his delight to be searching into, and conversing with God's commandments, by reading, hearing, and meditation, *Psal. i. 2.* He not only delights in God's promises, but in his precepts, and thinks himself happy under God's government, as well as in his favour. It is a pleasure to him to be found in the way of his duty, and he is in his element when he is in the service of God. Herein he delights greatly, more than in any of the employments and enjoyments of this world. And what he doth in religion, is done from the principles, because he sees amiableness in religion, and advantage by it.

(2.) They are honest and sincere in their professions and intentions. They are called *the upright*, ver. 2, 4. that are really as good as they seem to be, and deal faithfully both with God and man. There is no true religion without sincerity: that is gospel perfection.

(3.) They are both just and kind in all their dealings; *He is gracious, full of compassion, and righteous*, ver. 4. dares not do any wrong to any man, but doth to every man all the good he can, and that from a principle of compassion and kindness. It was said of God in the foregoing psalm, ver. 4. *He is gracious, and full of compassion*; and here it is said of the good man, that he is so; for herein we must be followers of God, as dear children; be merciful as he is. He is full of compassion, and yet righteous; what he doth good with, is what he came honestly by; God hates robbery for burnt-offerings, and so doth he. One instance is given of his beneficence, ver. 5. *He sheweth favour, and lendeth.* Sometimes there is as much charity in lending, as in giving, as it obligeth the borrower both to industry and honesty. He is *gracious and lendeth*, *Psal. xxxvii. 26. i. e.* he doth it from a right principle, not as the usurer lends for his own advantage, nor merely out of generosity, but out of pure charity: he doth it in a right manner, not grudgingly, but pleasantly, and with a cheerful countenance.

2. The blessedness that is here entailed upon those that answer these characters: Happiness, all happiness to the man that feareth the Lord. Whatever men think or say of them, God saith they are blessed; and his saying so, makes them so.

(1.) The posterity of good men shall fare the better for his goodness, ver. 2. *His seed shall be mighty on earth*; perhaps, he himself shall not be so great in the world, nor make such a figure as his seed after him shall, for his sake. Religion has been the raising of many a family, if not so as to advance it high, yet so as to found it firm. When good men themselves are happy in heaven, their seed, perhaps, are considerable on earth, and will themselves own it is by virtue of a blessing descending from them. *The generation of the upright shall be blessed*: if they tread in their steps, they shall be the more blessed for their relation to them; *beloved for the father's sake*, *Rom. xi. 28.* for so runs the covenant; *I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed*: while the seed of evil doers shall never be renowned. Let the children of godly parents value themselves upon it, and take heed of doing any thing to forfeit the blessing entailed upon the generation of the upright.

(2.) They shall prosper in the world, and especially their souls shall prosper, ver. 3. 1. They shall be blessed with outward prosperity,

prosperity, as far as is good for them; *Wealth and riches shall be in the upright man's house*, not in his heart; for he is none of those in whom the love of money reigns; perhaps, not much in his hand, for he only begins to raise the estate, but in his house, his family shall grow rich when he is gone. But, 2. That which is much better is, that they shall be blessed with spiritual blessings, which are the true riches. *His wealth shall be in his house*, for he must leave that to others; but *his righteousness* he himself shall have the comfort of it to himself, it *endureth for ever*. Grace is better than gold, for it will outlast it. He shall have wealth and riches, and yet shall keep up his religion, and in a prosperous condition, shall *still hold fast his integrity*; which many that kept it in the storm, throw off and let go in the sunshine. Then worldly prosperity is a blessing, when it doth not make men cool in their piety, but they still persevere in that; and when this endures in the family, and goes along with the wealth and riches, and the heirs of the father's estate inherit his virtues too, that is a happy family indeed. However, the good man's *righteousness endures for ever*, in the *crown of righteousness which fades not away*.

(3.) They shall have comfort in affliction, *ver. 4. Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness*. It is here implied, that good men may be in affliction, the promise doth not exempt them from that, they shall have their share in the common calamities of human life; but, *when they sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light to them*, Mich. vii. 8. They shall be supported and comforted under their troubles; their spirits shall be lightsome when their outward condition is clouded: *Sat lucis intus*. In Egyptian darkness the Israelites had *light in their dwellings*. They shall be in due time, and, perhaps, when they least expect it, delivered out of their troubles; when the night is darkest the day dawns; nay, at evening time, when night was looked for, it shall be light.

(4.) They shall have wisdom for the management of all their concerns, *ver. 5. He that doth good with his estate, God's providence shall increase it, not by miracle, but by his prudence: He shall guide his affairs with discretion*; and his God doth *instruct him to discretion*, and *teach him*, Isa. xxviii. 26. It is part of the character of a good man, that he will use his discretion in managing his affairs, in getting and saving, that he may have to give. It may be understood of the affairs of his charity; he *sheweth favour, and lendeth*; but then it is *with discretion*, that his charity may not be misplaced; that he may give to proper objects what is proper to be given, and in due time and proportion. And it is part of the promise to him that thus useth discretion, that God will give him more. They that most use their wisdom, see most of their need of it, and *ask it of God*, who hath promised to *give it liberally*, Jam. i. 5. *he will guide his words with judgment*; so it is in the original; and there is nothing in which we have more occasion for wisdom, than in the government of the tongue; Blessed is he, to whom God gives that wisdom.

6. Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. 7. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD. 8. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he see *his desire* upon his enemies. 9. He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour. 10. The wicked shall see it, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away: the desire of the wicked shall perish.

In these verses we have,

1. The satisfaction of saints, and their stability: It is the happiness of a good man, that *he shall not be moved for ever*, *ver. 6.* Satan and his instruments endeavour to move him, but his foundation is firm, and *he shall never be moved*; at least, *not moved for ever*; but if he be shaken for a time, yet he settles again presently.

(1.) A good man will have a settled reputation, and that is a great satisfaction. A good man shall have a good name, *i. e.* a name for good things, with God and good people. *The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance*, *ver. 6.* and in this sense *his righteousness endures for ever*, *i. e.* the memorial of it, *ver. 9.* There are those that do all they can to fully his reputation, and to load him with reproach; but his integrity shall be cleared up, and the honour of it shall survive him. Some that have been eminently righteous, are *had in a lasting remembrance* on earth; wherever the scripture is read, their good deeds are *told for a memorial* of them. And the memory of many a good man that is dead and gone, is still blessed; but in heaven their remembrance shall be truly everlasting, and the honour of their righteousness shall there endure for ever with the reward of it, in the *crown of glory that fades not away*. They that are forgotten on earth, and despised, are remembered there, and honoured, and *their righteousness found unto praise, and honour, and glory*, 1 Pet. i. 7. then, at furthest, shall the horn of a good man *be exalted with honour*, as that of the unicorn when he is a conqueror. Wicked men now in their pride *lift up their horns on high*, but they shall all be *cut off*, Psalm lxxv. 5, 10. The godly, in their humility and humiliation, have *desi-*

led their horn in the dust, Job xvi. 15. but the day is coming when it *shall be exalted with honour*. That which shall especially turn to the honour of good men, is their liberality and bounty to the poor: *He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor*; he hath not suffered his charity to run all in one channel, or directed it to some few objects that he had a particular kindness for; but he has dispersed it, *given a portion to seven, and also to eight, hath sown beside all waters*, and by thus scattering he hath increased; and this is *his righteousness which endureth for ever*. Alms are called righteousness, not because they will justify us by making atonement for our evil deeds, but because they are good deeds, which we are obliged to; so that if we are not charitable, we are not just; we *withhold good from those to whom it is due*. The honour of this endureth for ever, for it shall be taken notice of in the great day: *I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat*. This is quoted as an inducement and encouragement to charity, 2 Cor. ix. 9.

(2.) A good man shall have a settled spirit, and that is a much greater satisfaction than the former; for *he shall not be moved, whatever happens, not moved either from his duty, or from his comfort*; for *he shall not be afraid, his heart is established*, *ver. 7, 8.* This is a part both of the character, and of the comfort of good people. It is their endeavour to keep their minds staid upon God, and so to keep them calm and easy, and undisturbed; and God has promised them both cause to do so, and grace to do so. Observe, 1. It is the duty and interest of the people of God, not to *be afraid of evil tidings*; not to be afraid of hearing bad news: and when they do, not to be put into confusion by it, and into an amazing expectation of worse and worse; but whatever happens, whatever threatens, to be able to say with blessed Paul, *None of these things move me*, neither will I *fear, though the earth be removed*, Psalm xvi. 2. 2. The fixedness of the heart, and the establishment of that, is a sovereign remedy against the disquieting fear of evil tidings. If we keep our thoughts composed, and our selves masters of them, our wills resigned to the holy will of God, our temper sedate, and our spirits even under all the unevennesses of providence, we are well fortified against the tosses of the timorous. 3. Trusting in the Lord, is the best and surest way of fixing and establishing the heart. By faith we must cast anchor in the promise, in the word of God, and so return to him, and repose in him as our rest. The heart of man cannot fix any where to its satisfaction, but in the truth of God, and there it finds firm footing. 4. They whose hearts are established by faith, will patiently wait till they have gained their point. *He shall not be afraid, until he see his desire upon his enemies*, *i. e.* till he come to heaven, where he shall see Satan, and all his spiritual enemies, trodden under his feet, and as Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the sea-shore. *Until he look upon his oppressors*, so Dr. Hammond; *i. e.* till he behold them securely, and look boldly in their faces, as being now no longer under their power. It will compleat the satisfaction of the saints, when they shall look back upon their troubles and pressures, and be able to say with St. Paul, when he had recounted the persecutions he endured, 2 Tim. iii. 11. *But out of them all the Lord delivered me.*

2. The vexation of sinners, *ver. 10.* Two things shall fret them. 1. The felicity of the righteous; *The wicked shall see the righteous in prosperity and honour, and shall be grieved*; It will vex them to see their innocence cleared, and their low estate regarded; and those whom they hated and despised, and whose ruin they sought, and hoped to see, the favourites of heaven, and advanced to have *dominion over them*, Psalm xlix. 14. this will make them *gnash with their teeth, and pine away*. This is often fulfilled in this world. The happiness of the saints is the envy of the wicked, and that envy is the *rotteness of their bones*. But it will most fully be accomplished in the other world, when it shall make damned sinners *gnash with their teeth*, to see *Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom*; to see *all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and themselves thrust out*. 2. Their own disappointment; *The desire of the wicked shall perish*: their desire was wholly to the world and the flesh, and they ruled over them; and therefore when these perish, their joy is gone, and their expectations from them are cut off, to their everlasting confusion; their hope is as a spider's web.

P S A L M CXIII.

This psalm begins and ends with Hallelujah; for, as many others, it is designed to promote the great and good work of praising God.

1. We are here called upon and urged to praise God, *ver. 1, — 3.* 2. We are here furnished with matter for praise, and words are put into our mouths; in singing which, we must with holy fear and love give to God the glory of, (1.) The elevations of his glory and greatness, *ver. 4, 5.* (2.) The condescensions of his grace and goodness, *ver. 6, — 9.* which very much illustrate one another, that we may be duly affected with both.

1. Praise ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD. 2. Blessed be the name of the LORD, from this time forth

forth and for evermore. 3. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the LORD's name is to be praised. 4. The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. 5. Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high? 6. Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth? 7. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghil: 8. That he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people. 9. He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD.

In this psalm,

1. We are exhorted to give glory to God, to give him the glory due to his name: the invitation is very pressing, *Praise ye the Lord*, and again, and again, *Praise him, praise him; blessed be his name*, for it is to be praised, *ver. 1, 2, 3.* This intimates, (1.) That it is a necessary and most excellent duty, greatly pleasing to God, and has a large room in religion. (2.) That it is a duty we should much abound in, in which we should be frequently employed and greatly enlarged. (3.) That it is work we are very backward to, and which we need to be engaged and excited to by precept upon precept, and line upon line. (4.) That those who are much in praising God themselves will court others to it, both because they find the weight of the work, and that there is need of all the help they can fetch in, there is employment for all hearts, all hands, and all little enough: and because they find the pleasure of it, which they wish all their friends may share in.

Observe, 1. From whom God hath praise; from his own people, they are here called upon to praise God, as those that will answer the call, *Praise, O ye servants of the Lord.* They have most reason to praise him; for they that attend him as his servants, know him best and receive most of his favours, and it is their business to praise him, that is the work required of them as his servants; it is easy pleasant work to speak well of their Master, and do him what honour they can: if they do not, who should? Some understand it of the Levites; but if so, all christians are a royal priesthood, to shew forth the praises of him that has called them, 1 Pet. ii. 9. The angels are the servants of the Lord, who, though they need not be called upon by us to praise God, yet it is a comfort to us that they do it better than we can.

2. From whom he ought to have praise:

1. From all ages, *ver. 2.* From this time forth for evermore; let not this work die with us, but let us be doing it in a better world, and let those that come after us be doing it in this. Let not our seed degenerate, but let God be praised through all the generations of time, and not in this only. We must bless the Lord in our day, by saying with the psalmist, *Blessed be his name now and always.*

2. From all places: From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, i. e. throughout the habitable world; let all that enjoy the benefit of the Sun-rising, (and those that do so must count upon it that he will set) give thanks for that light to the Father of lights. God's name is to be praised, i. e. it ought to be praised by all nations; for in every place, from East to West, there appear the manifest proofs and products of his wisdom, power and goodness; and it is to be lamented that so great a part of mankind are ignorant of him, and give that praise to others which is due to him alone. But, perhaps, there is more in it; as the former verse gave us a glimpse of the kingdom of glory, intimating, that God's name shall be blessed for ever, when time shall be no more, that praise shall be the work of heaven; so this verse gives us a glimpse of the kingdom of grace in the gospel dispensation of it, when the church shall no longer be confined to the Jewish nation, but shall spread it self all the world over, when in every place spiritual incense shall be offered to our God, Mal. i. 11. then from the rising to the setting of the sun, the Lord's name shall be praised, by some in all countries.

2. We are here directed what to give him the glory of.

1. Let us look up with an eye of faith, and see how high his glory is in the upper world, and mention that to his praise, *ver. 4, 5.* We are in our praises to exalt his name, for he is high, his glory is high. (1.) High above all nations; their kings, though never so pompous; their people, though never so numerous. Whether it be true of an earthly king or no, that though he is *major singulis*, he is *minor universis*, we will not dispute; but we are sure it is not true of the King of kings. Put all the nations together, and he is above them all; and they are before him as the drop of the bucket, and the small dust of the balance, Isa. xl. 15, 17. Let all nations think and speak highly of God, for he is high above them all. (2.) High above the heavens; the throne of his glory is in the highest heavens; which should raise our hearts in praising him, Lam. iii. 41. His glory is above the heavens, i. e. above the angels; he is above what they are, their brightness is nothing to his above what they do, for they are under his command and do his pleasure; and above what even they can speak him to be. He is exalted above all blessing and praise, not only all ours, but all theirs. We must therefore

say with an holy admiration, *Who is like unto the Lord our God!* Who of all the princes and potentates of the earth? Who of all the bright and blessed spirits above? None can equal him, none dare compare with him. God is to be praised as transcendently, incomparably and infinitely great; for he dwelleth on high, and from on high sees all, and rules all, and justly attracts all praise to himself.

2. Let us look round with an eye of observation, and see how extensive his goodness is in the lower world, and mention that to his praise. He is a God who exalteth himself to dwell, who humbleth himself in heaven, and in earth. Some think here is a transposition, *He exalteth himself to dwell in heaven, he humbleth himself to behold on earth*: but the sense is plain enough as we take it; only observe, God is said to exalt himself, and to humble himself, both are his own act and deed; as he is self-existent, so he is both the fountain of his own honour, and the spring of his own grace. God's condescending goodness appears,

1. In the cognizance he takes of the world below him; his glory is above the nations, and above the heavens, and yet neither are neglected by him, *God is great, yet he despiseth not any*, Job xxxvi. 5. *He humbleth himself to behold* all his creatures, all his subjects, though he be infinitely above them. Considering the infinite perfection, sufficiency, and felicity of the divine nature, it must be acknowledged an act of wonderful condescension that God is pleased to take into the thoughts of his eternal counsel, and into the hand of his universal providence, both the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth, Dan. iv. 35. even in this dominion he humbleth himself. (1.) It is condescension in him to behold the things in heaven, to support the beings, direct the motions, and accept the praises and services of the angels themselves; for he needs them not, nor is benefited by them. (2.) Much more is it condescension in him to behold the things that are in the earth, to visit the sons of men, and regard them, to order and over-rule their affairs, and to take notice of what they say and do, that he may fill the earth with his goodness, and so set us an example of stooping to do good, of taking notice of, and concerning ourselves about our inferiors. If it be such condescension for God to behold things in heaven and earth, what an amazing condescension was it for the Son of God to come from heaven to earth and take our nature upon him, that he might seek and save them that were lost! Here indeed he humbled himself.

2. In the particular favour he sometimes shews to the least and lowest of the inhabitants of this lesser lower world. He not only beholds the great things in the earth, but the meanest, and those things which great men commonly overlook. Nor doth he only behold them, but do wonders for them, and things that are very surprizing, out of the common road of providence and chain of causes; which shews that the world is governed not by a course of nature, for that would always run in the same channel, but by a God of nature, who delights in doing things we looked not for.

1. These that have been long despicable are sometimes on a sudden made honourable, *ver. 7, 8.* *He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, that he may set him with princes.* (1.) Thus God doth sometimes magnify himself and his own wisdom, power and sovereignty; when he hath some great work to do, he chooseth to employ those in it that were least likely, and least thought of for it by themselves or others, to the highest post of honour: Gideon is fetched from threshing, Saul from seeking the asses, and David from keeping the sheep; the apostles from fishing sent to be *fishers of men*. The treasure of the gospel is put into earthen vessels, and the weak and foolish ones of the world pitched upon to be preachers of it, to confound the wise and mighty, 1 Cor. i. 27, 28. that the excellency of the power may be of God, and all may see that promotion comes from him. (2.) Thus God doth sometimes reward the eminent piety and patience of his people that have long groaned under the burthen of poverty and disgrace. When Joseph's virtue was tried and manifested he was raised from the prison dust and set with princes. They that are wise will observe such returns of providence, and will understand by them the loving-kindness of the Lord. Some have applied this to the work of redemption by Jesus Christ, and not unfitly, for through him poor fallen men are raised out of the dust (one of the Jewish rabbins applies it to the resurrection of the dead) nay, out of the dunghil of sin, and set among princes, among angels, those princes of his people. Hannah had sung to this purpose, 1 Sam. ii. 6, 7, 8.

2. These that have been long barren are sometimes on a sudden made fruitful, *ver. 9.* This may look back to Sarah and Rebecca, Rachel, Hannah, and Sampson's mother, or forward to Elizabeth; and many such instances there have been in which God has looked on the affliction of his handmaids, and taken away their reproach. *He maketh the barren woman to keep house*, not only builds up the family, but thereby finds the heads of the family something to do. Note, They that have the comfort of a family must take the care of it; bearing children and guiding the house are put together, 1 Tim. v. 14. When God sets the barren in a family, he expects that she look well to the ways of her household, Prov. xxxi. 27. She is said to be a joyful mother of children, not only because, even in common cases, the pain is forgotten for joy that a man child is born into the world, but there is particular joy when a child is born to those that have been long childless, as Luke i. 14. and therefore there

there ought to be particular thanksgiving: *Praise ye the Lord*. Yet in this case *rejoice with trembling*; for though the sorrowful mother be made joyful, the joyful mother may be made sorrowful again; if the children be either removed from her, or embittered to her. This therefore may be applied to the Gospel church among the Gentiles, the building of which is illustrated by this similitude, *Isa. liv. 1. Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear*, *Gal. iv. 27. for which we, that being sinners of the Gentiles, are children of the desolate, have reason to say, Praise ye the Lord*.

P S A L M CXIV.

The deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, gave birth to their church and nation, which were then founded, then formed; that work of wonder ought therefore to be had in everlasting remembrance: God gloried in it in the preface to the ten commandments, and Hos. xi. 1. Out of Egypt have I called my son. In this psalm it is celebrated in lively streams of praise; it was fitly therefore made a part of the great hallelujah, or song of praise, which the Jews were wont to sing at the close of the passover supper. It must never be forgotten, 1. That they were brought out of slavery, ver. 1. 2. That God set up his tabernacle among them, ver. 2. 3. That the sea and Jordan were divided before them, ver. 3, 5. 4. That the earth shook at the giving the law, when God came down on mount Sinai, ver. 4, 6, 7. 5. That God gave them water out of the rock, ver. 8. In singing this psalm we must acknowledge God's power and goodness in what he did for Israel, applying it to the much greater work of wonder, our redemption by Christ, and encouraging our selves, and others, to trust in God in the greatest streights.

1. **W**hen Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language;
2. Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion.
3. The sea saw it, and fled; Jordan was driven back.
4. The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs.
5. What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back?
6. Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams; and ye little hills like lambs?
7. Tremble thou earth at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the God of Jacob.
8. Which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters.

The psalmist is here remembering the days of old, the years of the right hand of the most High, and the wonders which their fathers told them of, *Judg. vi. 13. for time, as it doth not wear out the guilt of sin, so it should not wear out the sense of mercy*.

Let it never be forgotten,

1. That God brought Israel out of the house of bondage with a high hand and a stretched out arm. *Israel went out of Egypt, ver. 1. They did not steal out clandestinely, nor were they driven out, but fairly went out, marched out with all the marks of honour: they went out from a barbarous people, that had used them barbarously, from a people of a strange language, Psal. lxxxi. 5. The Israelites, it seems, preserved their own language pure among them, and cared not for learning the language of their oppressors. By which distinction from them they kept up an earnest of their deliverance.*

2. That he himself framed their civil and sacred constitution, *ver. 2. Judah and Israel were his sanctuary, his dominion, i. e. When he delivered them out of the hand of their oppressors, it was that they might serve him, both in holiness and in righteousness, in the duties of religious worship, and in obedience to the moral law in their whole conversation. Let my people go that they may serve me. In order to this, (1.) He set up his sanctuary among them, in which he gave them the special tokens of his presence with them, and promised to receive their homage and tribute. Happy the people that have God's sanctuary among them, (see *Exod. xxv. 8. Ezek. xxxvii. 26.*) much more they that, like Judah here, are his sanctuaries, his living temples, on whom *Holiness to the Lord* is written. (2.) He set up his dominion among them, was himself their Lawgiver and their Judge; and their government was a theocracy, *The Lord was their King*. All the world is God's dominion, but Israel was so in a peculiar manner. What is God's sanctuary must be his dominion; those only have the privileges of his house that submit to the laws of it; and for this end Christ hath redeemed us, that he might bring us into God's service, and engage us for ever in it.*

3. That the Red-sea was divided before them at their coming out of Egypt, both for their rescue, and the ruin of their enemies. And the river Jordan, when they entered into Canaan, for their honour, and the confusion and terror of their enemies, *ver. 3. The sea saw it, saw there that Judah was God's sanctuary, and Israel his dominion; and therefore fled; for nothing could have been more awful. This was it that drove Jordan back, and was an invincible dam to his streams; God was at the head of that people, and therefore they must give way to them, must make room for them; they must retire, contrary to their nature, when God speaks the*

word. To illustrate this, the psalmist asks, in a poetical strain, *ver. 5. What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest?* and furnisheth the sea with an answer, *ver. 7. it was at the presence of the Lord*. This is designed to express, 1. The reality of the miracle, that it was not by any power of nature, or from any natural cause, but it was *at the presence of the Lord*, who gave the word. 2. The mercy of the miracle; *What ailed thee?* was it in a frolic? was it only to amuse men? No, it was *at the presence of the God of Jacob*; it was in kindness to the Israel of God; *for the salvation of that chosen people, that God was thus displeased against the rivers, and his wrath was against the sea, as the prophet speaks, Hab. iii. 8.—13. Isa. li. 10. lxiii. 11, &c.* 3. The wonder and surprize of the miracle. Who would have thought of such a thing? Shall the course of nature be changed, and its fundamental laws dispensed with, to serve a turn for God's Israel? Well may the *dukes of Edom be amazed*, and the *mighty men of Moab tremble*, *Exod. xv. 15.* 4. The honour hereby put upon Israel, who are taught to triumph over the sea, and Jordan, as unable to stand before them. Note, There is no sea, no Jordan so deep, so broad, but when God's time is come for the redemption of his people, it shall be divided, and driven back, if it stand in their way. Apply this, (1.) To the planting of the Christian church in the world; what ailed Satan, and the powers of darkness, to tremble and truckle as they did? *Mark i. 34.—ver. 7.* What ailed the heathen oracles that they were silenced, struck dumb, struck dead? What ailed their idolatries and witchcrafts, that they died away before the gospel, and melted like snow before the sun? What ailed the persecutors and opposers of the gospel to give up their cause, to hide their guilty heads, and call to rocks and mountains for shelter? *Rev. vi. 15. It was at the presence of the Lord*, and that power which went along with the gospel. (2.) To the work of grace in the heart; what turns the stream in a regenerate soul? What ails the lusts and corruptions that they fly back? that the prejudices are removed, and the whole man become new? It is at the presence of God's Spirit, that imaginations are *cast down*, *2 Cor. x. 5.*

4. That the earth shook and trembled when God came down on mount Sinai to give the law, *ver. 4. The mountains skipped like rams, and then the little hills might well be excused if they skipped like lambs*, either when they are frightened, or when they sport themselves. The same power that fixed the fluid waters, and made them stand still, shook the stable mountains, and made them tremble; for all the powers of nature are under the check of the God of nature. Mountains and hills are before God but like rams and lambs, even the bulkiest and the most rocky are as manageable by him, as they are by the shepherd. The trembling of the mountains before the Lord, may shame the stupidity and obduracy of the children of men, who are not moved at the discoveries of his glory. The psalmist asks the mountains and hills what ailed them to skip thus? and answers for them as for the seas, it was *at the presence of the Lord*, before whom, not only those mountains, but the earth it self may well tremble, *ver. 7. since it has lain under a curse for man's sin. See Psalm civ. 32. Isa. lxiv. 3, 4.* He that made the hills and mountains to skip thus, can, when he pleaseth, dissipate the strength and spirit of the proudest of his enemies, and make them tremble.

5. That God supplied them with water out of the rock, which followed them through the dry and sandy deserts. Well may the earth, and all its inhabitants, tremble before that God who *turned the rock into a standing water, ver. 8. and what cannot he do who did that?* The same almighty power that turned waters into a rock, to be a wall to Israel, *Exod. xiv. 22. turned the rock into waters to be a well to Israel: as they were protected, so they were provided for by miracles, standing miracles, for such was the standing water, that fountain of waters, into which the rock, the flinty rock, was turned, and that rock was Christ, 1 Cor. x. 4.* For he is a fountain of living waters to his Israel, from whom they receive grace for grace.

P S A L M CXV.

Many ancient translations join this psalm to that which goes next before it, the Septuagint particularly, and the vulgar Latin; but it is in the Hebrew a distinct psalm. In it we are taught to give glory, 1. To God, and not to our selves, ver. 1. 2. To God, and not to idols, ver. 2,—8. We must give glory to God, (1.) By trusting in him, and in his promise and blessing, ver. 9,—15. (2.) By blessing him, ver. 16,—18. Some think this psalm was penned upon occasion of some great distress and trouble that the church of God was in, when the enemies were insolent and threatening, in which case the church doth not so much pour out her complaint to God, as place her confidence in God, and triumph in doing so; and with such an holy triumph we ought to sing this psalm.

1. **N**OT unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truths sake.
2. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?
3. But our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he pleased.
4. Their

4. Their idols *are* silver and gold, the work of mens hands. 5. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not. 6. They have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not. 7. They have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not; neither speak they through their throat. 8. They that make them, are like unto them; *so is* every one that trusteth in them.

Sufficient care is here taken to answer both the pretensions of self, and the reproaches of idolaters.

1. Boasting is here for ever excluded, *ver. 1.* Let no opinion of our own merits have any room either in our prayers or in our praises, but let both centre in God's glory, (1.) Have we received any mercy, gone through any service, or gained any success? we must not assume the glory of it to our selves, but ascribe it wholly to God: We must not imagine that we do any thing for God by our own strength, or deserve any thing from God by our own righteousness; but all the good we do is done by the power of his grace, and all the good we have is the gift of his meer mercy, and therefore he must have all the praise. Say not, *The power of my hand has gotten me this wealth*, Deut. viii. 17. Say not, *For my righteousness the Lord has done these great and kind things for me*, Deut. ix. 4. No, all our songs must be sung to this humble tune, *Not unto us, O Lord*, and again, *not unto us, but to thy name* let all the glory be given; for whatever good is wrought in us, or wrought for us, it is for his mercy, and his truth's sake, because he will glorify his mercy, and fulfil his promise. All our crowns must be cast at the feet of *him that sits upon the throne*, for that is the proper place for them. (2.) Are we in pursuit of any mercy, and wrestling with God for it? we must take our encouragement in prayer from God only, and have an eye to his glory more than to our own benefit in it. Lord, do so and so for us, not that we may have the credit and comfort of it, but that thy mercy and truth may have the glory of it. This must be our highest and ultimate end in our prayers, and therefore it is made the first petition in the Lord's prayer, as that which guides all the rest; *Hallowed be thy name*; and, in order to that, *Give us our daily bread*, &c. This also must satisfy us, if our prayers be not answered in the letter of them; whatever becomes of us, *unto thy name give glory*. See *John xii. 27, 28.*

2. The reproach of the heathen is here for ever silenced, and justly retorted.

(1.) The psalmist complains of the reproach of the heathen, *ver. 2.* *Wherefore should they say, where is now their God?* i. e. 1. Why do they say so? Do they not know that our God is every where by his providence; and always nigh to us by his promise and grace? 2. Why doth God permit them to say so? Nay, why is Israel brought so low, that they have some colour for saying so? Lord, appear for our relief, that thou mayst vindicate thy self, and glorify thine own name.

(2.) He gives a direct answer to their question, *ver. 3.* Do they ask where is our God? We can tell where he is: 1. In the upper world is the presence of his glory; *Our God is in the heavens*, where the gods of the heathen never were; *in the heavens*, and therefore out of sight; but though his majesty be unapproachable, it doth not therefore follow that his being is questionable. 2. In the lower world are the products of his power; *He hath done whatsoever he pleased*, according to the counsel of his will: he hath a sovereign dominion, and an universal uncontrollable influence. Do you ask where he is? He is at the beginning and end of every thing, *and not far from any of us.*

3. He returns their question upon themselves. They asked where is the God of Israel? because he is not seen. He doth, in effect, ask what are the gods of the heathen? because they are seen.

(1.) He shews that their gods, though they are not shapeless things, are senseless things. Idolaters at first worshipped the sun and moon, *Job xxxi. 26.* which was bad enough, but not so bad as that which they were now come to, (for evil men grow worse and worse) which was the worshipping of images, *ver. 4.* The matter of them was *silver and gold*, digged out of the earth, (*man found them poor and dirty in a mine*, Herbert;) proper things to make money of, but not to make gods of. The make of them was from the artificer; they are creatures of mens vain imaginations, and *the works of mens hands*, and therefore can have no divinity in them. If man is the work of God's hands, as certainly he is, and it was his honour that he was made *in the image of God*, it is absurd to think that that can be God, which is the work of mens hands; or that it can be any other than a dishonour to God, to make him in the image of man. The argument is irrefragable; *The workman made it, therefore it is not God*, Hof. viii. 6. These idols are represented here as the most ridiculous things, a meer jest, that would seem to be something, but were really nothing; fitter for a toy-shop, than a temple; for children to play with, than for men to pray to. The painter, the carver, the statuary, did their part well enough; they made them with *mouths and eyes, ears and noses, hands and feet*, but they could put no life into them; and therefore no sense. They had better have wor-

shipped a dead carcass, for that had life in it once, than a dead image, which neither has life nor can have. *They speak not*, in answer to those that consult them, the crafty priest must do it for them. In Baal's image there was *no voice; neither any that answered.* *They see not* the prostrations of their worshippers before them, much less their burthens and wants. *They hear not* their prayers, though never so loud; *they smell not* their incense, though never so strong, never so sweet; *they handle not* the gifts presented to them; much less have they any gifts to bestow on their worshippers; they cannot *stretch forth their hands to the needy.* *They walk not*, they cannot stir a step for the relief of those that apply to them. Nay, they do not so much as *breathe through their throat*; they have not the least sign or symptom of life, but are as dead things, after the priest has pretended to consecrate them; and call a deity into them, as they were before.

(2.) He thence infers the foolishness of their worshippers, *ver. 8.* *They that make them* images shew their ingenuity, and doubtless are sensible men; but *they that make them* gods shew their stupidity and folly, and *are like unto them*, as senseless, blockish things; *they see not* the invisible things of the true and living God in the works of creation; *they hear not* the voice of the day and the night, which in every speech and language declare his glory, *Psal. xix. 2, 3.* By worshipping these foolish puppets they make themselves more and more foolish *like them*, and set themselves at a greater distance from every thing that is spiritual, sinking themselves deeper into the mire of sense: and withal they provoke God to *give them up to a reprobate mind, a mind void of judgment*, Rom. i. 28. *They that trust in them* act very absurdly, and very unreasonably; are senseless, helpless, useless, like them; and they will find it so themselves to their own confusion. We shall know where our God is, and so shall they, to their cost, when theirs are gone, *Jer. x. 3, 11.* *Isa. xlv. 9, &c.*

9. O Israel, trust thou in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. 10. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. 11. Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. 12. The LORD hath been mindful of us, he will bless us, he will bless the house of Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron. 13. He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great. 14. The LORD shall increase you more and more; you and your children. 15. You are blessed of the LORD, which made heaven and earth. 16. The heaven, even the heavens are the LORD's: but the earth hath he given to the children of men. 17. The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence. 18. But we will bless the LORD, from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD.

In these verses,

1. We are earnestly exhorted, all of us, to repose our confidence in God; and not suffer our confidence in him to be shaken by the heathens insulting over us, upon the account of our present distresses. It is folly to trust in dead images; but it is wisdom to trust in the living God; for he is a *help and a shield*, to those that do *trust in him*; a help to furnish them with, and forward them in that which is good, and a shield to fortify them against, and protect them from every thing that is evil. Therefore, (1.) Let Israel trust in the Lord, the body of the people, as to their publick interests, and every particular Israelite, as to his own private concern, let them leave it to God to dispose of all for them, and believe he will dispose of all for the best, and will be *their help and shield.* (2.) Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, and all the families of the *house of Aaron*, trust in the Lord, *ver. 10.* they are most maligned and struck at by the enemies; and therefore of them God has particular care. They ought to be examples to others of a cheerful confidence in God, and a faithful adherence to him in the worst of times. (3.) Let the profelytes that are not of the seed of Israel, but *fear the Lord*, that worship him, and make conscience of their duty to him, let them *trust in him*, for he will not fail nor forsake them, *ver. 11.* Note, Wherever there is an awful fear of God, there may be a cheerful faith in him: they that reverence his word may rely upon it.

2. We are greatly encouraged to trust in God, and good reason is given us, why we should stay our selves upon him with an entire satisfaction. Consider;

(1.) What we have experienced, *ver. 12.* *The Lord has been mindful of us*, and never unmindful; hath been so constantly, has been so remarkably upon special occasions. He hath been mindful of our case, our wants, and burthens; mindful of our prayers to him, and his promises to us; and the covenant relation between him and us. All our comforts must be attributed to this, God's *thoughts to us-ward*; he *hath been mindful of us*, though we have forgotten him. Let this engage us to trust in him, that we have found him faithful.

(2.) What we may expect. From what he has done for us, we may infer, *he will bless us*; he that has been our *help, and our shield,*

shield, will be so; that has *remembered us in our low estate*, will not forget us; for he is still the same, his power and goodness the same, and his promise inviolable; so that we have reason to hope, he that hath delivered, and doth, will yet deliver. Yet this is not all; *he will bless us*, i. e. he hath promised that he will; he hath pronounced a blessing upon all his people; God's blessing us is not only speaking good to us, but doing well for us; those whom he blesteth, are blessed indeed. It is particularly promised, that *he will bless the house of Israel*, i. e. he will bless the common-wealth, will bless his people in their civil, secular interests; *he will bless the house of Aaron*, i. e. the church, the ministry; will bless his people in their religious concerns. The priests were to bless the people, it was their office, *Numb. vi. 28.* but God blessed them, and so blessed their blessings. Nay, *ver. 13. he will bless them that fear the Lord*, though they be not of the house of Israel, or the house of Aaron; for it was a truth before Peter perceived it, *that in every nation, he that fears God, is accepted of him*, and blessed, *Acts x. 34, 35.* *He will bless them both small and great*, i. e. both young and old; God has blessings in store for them that are good betimes, and for them that are old disciples; both those that are poor in the world, and those that make a figure: the greatest need his blessing, and it shall not be denied to the meanest that fear him. Both the weak in grace, and the strong, shall be blessed of God, the lambs and the sheep of his flock.

It is promised, *ver. 14. The Lord shall increase you.* Whom God blesteth he increaseth; that was one of the earliest and most ancient blessings, *Be fruitful, and multiply.* God's blessing gives an increase; increase in number, building up the family; increase in wealth, adding to the estate and honour; especially an increase in spiritual blessings, with the increasings of God. He will bless you with the increase of knowledge and wisdom, of grace, holiness and joy; those are blessed indeed, whom God thus increaseth, who are made wiser, and better, and fitter for God and heaven. It is promised that this shall be, 1. A constant continual increase: *He shall increase you more and more*: so that as long as you live, you shall be still increasing, till you come to perfection, as the shining light, *Prov. iv. 18.* 2. An hereditary increase; *You and your children*; you in your children; it is a comfort to parents to see their children increasing in wisdom and strength. There is a blessing entailed upon the seed of those that fear God, even in their infancy. For, *ver. 15. You are blessed of the Lord*, you and your children are so; *all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed*, *Isa. lxi. 9.* They that are the blessed of the Lord, have encouragement enough to trust in the Lord; as their help and shield, for it is he that made heaven and earth; therefore his blessings are free, for he needs not any thing himself; and therefore they are rich, for he hath all things at command for us, if we fear him, and trust in him. He that made heaven and earth, can doubtless make those happy that trust in him, and will do it.

3. We are stirred up to praise God, by the psalmist's example, who concludes the psalm with a resolution to persevere in his praises.

(1.) God is to be praised, *ver. 16.* He is greatly to be praised; for, 1. His glory is high. See how stately his palace is, and the throne he hath prepared in the heavens: *The heavens, even the heavens are the Lord's*; he is the rightful owner of all the treasures of light and bliss in the upper and better world, and is in the full possession of them, for he is himself infinitely bright and happy. 2. His goodness is large, for *the earth he hath given to the children of men*, having designed it, when he made it for their use, to find them with meat, drink, and lodging. Not but that still he is proprietor in chief; *the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof*; but he has let out that vineyard to these unthankful husbandmen, and from them he expects the rents and services: for though he has given them the earth, his eye is upon them, and he will call them to an account how they use it. Calvin complains, that profane wicked people, in his days, perverted this scripture, and made a jest of it, which some in our days do, arguing in banter, that God having given the earth to the children of men, he will no more look after it, nor after them upon it, but they may do what they will with it, and make their best of it as their portion; and, as if it were thrown like a prey among them, catch as catch can. It is pity such an instance as this gives of God's bounty to man, and such a proof as ariseth from it of man's obligation to God, should be thus abused: From the highest heavens it is certain God beholds all the children of men; to them he has given the earth; but to the children of God heaven is given.

(2.) The dead are not capable of praising him, *ver. 17.* nor any that go into silence. The soul indeed lives in a state of separation from the body, and is capable of praising God; and the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burthen of the flesh, do praise God; are still praising him; for they go up to the land of perfect light, and constant business: but the dead body cannot praise God, death puts an end to our glorifying God in this world of trial and conflict, to all our services in the field; the grave is a land of darkness and silence, where there is no work or device. This they plead with God for deliverance out of the hand of their enemies: Lord, if they prevail, to cut us off, the idols will carry the day, and there will be none to raise thee, to bear thy name, and to bear a testimony against the worshippers of

idols. *The dead praise not the Lord*, so as we do in the business, and for the comforts of this life. See *Psal. xxx. 9. lxxxviii. 9.*

(3.) Therefore it concerns us to praise him, *ver. 12.* But we, we that are alive, *will bless the Lord*, we, and those that shall come after us will do it, *from this time forth and for evermore*, to the end of time; we, and those we shall remove to, *from this time forth*, and to eternity. *The dead praise not the Lord*, therefore we will do it the more diligently. 1. Others are dead, and an end is thereby put to their service, and therefore we will lay out our selves to do so much the more for God; that we may fill up the gap. *Moses my servant is dead, now therefore Joshua arise.* 2. We our selves must shortly go to the land of silence; but while we do live, we will bless the Lord, will improve our time, and work that work of him that sent us into the world to praise him, before the night comes, and because *the night comes, wherein no man can work.* *The Lord will bless us*, *ver. 12.* he will do well for us, and therefore we will bless him, we will speak well of him: Poor returns for rich receivings! Nay, we will not only do it our selves, but will engage others to do it: *Praise the Lord*: praise him with us, praise him in your places, as we in ours; praise him when we are gone, that he may be praised for evermore. *Hallelujah.*

P S A L M CXVI.

This is a thanksgiving psalm; it is not certain, whether David penned it upon any particular occasion, or upon a general review of the many gracious deliverances God had wrought for him, out of six troubles, and seven, from which he takes rise for many very lively expressions of devotion, love and gratitude; and with the like pious affections our souls should be lifted up to God in singing it. Observe, 1. The great distress and danger that the psalmist was in, which almost drove him to despair, ver. 3, 10, 11. 2. The application he made to God in that distress, ver. 4. 3. The experience he had of God's goodness to him in answer to prayer; God heard him, ver. 1, 2. pitied him, ver. 5, 6. delivered him, ver. 8. 4. His care what acknowledgments he should make of the goodness of God to him, ver. 12. (1.) He will love God, ver. 1. (2.) He will continue to call upon him, ver. 2, 13, 17. (3.) He will rest in him, ver. 7. (4.) He will walk before him, ver. 9. (5.) He will pay his vows of thanksgiving, in which he will own the tender regard God had to him, and this publicly, ver. 13, 15. and ver. 17, 19. Lastly, He will continue God's faithful servant to his life's end, ver. 16. These are such breathings of a holy soul, as bespeak it very happy.

1. I Love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice, and my supplications. 2. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. 3. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. 4. Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. 5. Gracious is the LORD, and righteous: yea, our God is merciful. 6. The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me. 7. Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee. 8. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. 9. I will walk before the LORD, in the land of the living.

In this part of the psalm we have,

1. A general account of David's experience, and his pious resolutions, *ver. 1, 2.* which are as the contents of the whole psalm, and give an idea of it.

(1.) He had experienced God's goodness to him in answer to prayer: *He hath heard my voice, and my supplications.* David, in streights, had humbly and earnestly begged mercy of God, and God had heard him, i. e. had graciously accepted his prayer, taken cognizance of his case, and granted him an answer of peace. *He hath inclined his ear to me*; this intimates his readiness and willingness to hear prayer; he lays his ear, as it were, to the mouth of prayer, to hear it, though it be but whispered in *groanings that cannot be uttered.* He *hearkens and hears*, *Jer. viii. 6.* yet it implies also, that it is wonderful condescension in God to hear prayer; it is bowing his ear. Lord, what is man, that God should thus stoop to him!

(2.) He resolved, in consideration thereof, to devote himself entirely to God, and to his honour.

1. He will love God the better. He begins the psalm somewhat abruptly, with a profession of that which his heart was full of; *I love the Lord*; as *Psal. xviii. 1.* and fitly doth he begin with this, in compliance with the first and great commandment, and with God's end, in all the gifts of his bounty to us. I love him only, and nothing besides him, but what I love for him. God's love of compassion towards us, justly requires our love of complacency in him.

2. He will love prayer the better ; *therefore I will call upon him.* The experiences we have had of God's goodness to us, in answer to prayer, are great encouragements to us to continue praying ; we have sped well, notwithstanding our unworthiness, and our praying infirmities, and therefore why may we not ? God therefore answers prayer to make us love it, and expects this from us in return for his favour. Why should we glean in any other field, when we have been so well treated in this ? Nay, *I will call upon him as long as I live* ; Hebrew, *In my days* ; every day, to the last day. Note, As long as we continue living, we must continue praying : this breath we must breathe, till we breathe our last, because then we shall take our leave of it, and till then we have continual occasion for it.

2. A more particular narrative of God's gracious dealings with him, and the good impressions thereby made upon him.

1. God in his dealings with him shewed himself a good God, and therefore he bears this testimony to him, and leaves it upon record, *ver. 5. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous.* He is righteous, and did me no wrong in afflicting me ; he is gracious, and was very kind in supporting and delivering me. Let us all speak of God as we have found ; and have we ever found him otherwise than just and good ? No, *our God is merciful*, merciful to us, and *it is of his mercies that we are not consumed.* Review David's experiences.

(1.) He was in great distress and trouble, *ver. 3. The sorrows of death compassed me*, i. e. such sorrows as were likely to be his death, such as were thought to be the very pangs of death ; perhaps, here is the extremity of bodily pain, or trouble of mind, called here *the pains of hell* ; terror of conscience arising from sense of guilt. Note, The sorrows of death are great sorrows, and the pains of hell great pains. Let us therefore give diligence to prepare for the former, that we may escape the latter. These compassed him on every side, they arrested him ; *gat hold upon him*, so that he could not escape ; *without were fightings, within were fears.* I found trouble and sorrow ; not only it found me, but I found it. Those that are melancholy have a great deal of sorrow of their own finding, trouble which they create to themselves, by indulging fancy and passion : this has sometimes been the infirmity of good men : When God's providence makes our condition bad, let us not by our own imprudence make it worse.

(2.) In his trouble he had recourse to God by faithful and fervent prayer, *ver. 4.* He tells us, that he prayed : *Then called I upon the name of the Lord* : then, when he was brought to the last extremity, then he made use of this, not as the last remedy, but as the old and only remedy, which he had found a salve for every sore. He tells us what his prayer was ; it was short, but to the purpose ; *O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul*, i. e. save me from death, and save me from sin, for that is it that is killing to the soul. Both the humility and the fervency of his prayer are intimated in these words, *O Lord, I beseech thee* ; when we come to the throne of grace, we must come as beggars for an alms, for necessary food. The following words, *ver. 5. Gracious is the Lord*, may be taken as part of his prayer, as a plea to enforce his request, and encourage his faith and hope : Lord, *deliver my soul*, for thou art *gracious and merciful*, and that only I depend upon for relief.

(3.) God in answer to his prayer came in with seasonable and effectual relief. He found by experience that God is gracious and merciful, and, in his compassion, *preserveth the simple*, *ver. 6.* Because they are simple, i. e. sincere and upright, and without guile, therefore God preserves them, as he preserved Paul, who had his conversation in the world, *not with fleshly wisdom, but in simplicity, and godly sincerity.* Though they are simple, i. e. weak and helpless, and that cannot shift for themselves, men of no depth, no design, yet God preserves them, because they commit themselves to him, and have no confidence in their own sufficiency. Those that by faith put themselves under God's protection, shall be safe.

Let David speak his own experience.

1. God supported him under his troubles : *I was brought low*, was plunged into the depth of misery, and then *he helped me*, helped me both to bear the worst and to hope the best ; helped me to pray, else desire had failed ; helped me to wait, else faith had failed. I was one of the single ones whom God preserved ; the poor man who *cried, and the Lord heard him*, Psal. xxxiv. 6. Note, God's people are never brought so low, but that everlasting arms are under them, and they cannot sink who are sustained. Nay, it is in the time of need, at the dead lift, that God chooseth to help, *Deut. xxxii. 36.*

2. God saved him out of his troubles, *ver. 8. Thou hast delivered.* Which means either the preventing the distress he was ready to fall into, or the recovering of him from the distress he was already in. God graciously delivered, (1.) *His soul from death.* Note, It is God's great mercy to us that we are alive, and the mercy is the more sensible if we have been at death's door, and yet have been spared and raised up, just turned to destruction and yet ordered to return ; that a life so often forfeited and so often exposed, should yet be lengthened out, is a miracle of mercy. The deliverance of the soul from spiritual and eternal death is especially to be acknowledged by all those who are now sanctified, and shall be shortly glorified. (2.) His

eyes from tears, i. e. His heart from inordinate grief. It is a great mercy to be kept, either from the occasions of sorrow, the evil that causeth grief, or, however, from being swallowed up with over much sorrow. When God comforts those that are cast down, looseth the mourners sackcloth, and girdeth them with gladness, then he delivers *their eyes from tears*, which yet will not be perfectly done, till we come to that world where God shall *wipe away all tears from our eyes.* (3.) *His feet from falling*, from falling into sin, and so into misery. It is a great mercy when our feet are almost gone, then to have God *hold us by the right hand*, Psal. lxxii. 2. 23. So that though we enter into temptation, we are not overcome and overthrown by the temptation. Or, thou *hast delivered my feet from falling* into the grave, when I had one foot there already.

3. David, in his returns of gratitude to God, shewed himself a good man. God had done all this for him ; and therefore,

1. He will live a life of delight in God, *ver. 7. Return unto thy rest, O my soul*, i. e. (1.) Repose thy self and be easy, and do not put thy self into such a toss with distrustful disquieting fears, as thou hast sometimes done. Quiet thy self, and then enjoy thy self, God has dealt kindly with thee, and therefore thou needest not fear that ever he will deal hardly with thee. (2.) Repose thy self in God : Return to him as thy rest, and seek not for that rest in the creature which is to be had in him only. God is the soul's rest ; in him only it can *dwell at ease* ; to him therefore it must retire, and rejoice in him. He hath *dealt bountifully with us*, i. e. He hath provided sufficiently for our comfort and refreshment, and encouraged us to come to him for the benefit of it at all times, upon all occasions ; let us therefore be satisfied with that. Return to that rest which Christ gives to *the weary and heavy laden*, Matt. xi. 28. Return to thy Noah, his name signifies *rest*, as the dove when she found no rest returned to the ark. I know no word more proper to close our eyes with at night when we go to sleep, nor to close them with at death, that long sleep, than this, *Return to thy rest, O my soul.*

2. He will live a life of devotedness to God, *ver. 9. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living*, i. e. in this world, as long as I continue to live in it. Note 1. It is our great duty to *walk before the Lord*, to do all we do as becomes us in his presence, and under his eye ; to approve ourselves to him as a holy God, by conformity to him as our sovereign Lord, by subjection to his will : and as a God all-sufficient, by a cheerful confidence in him : *I am the almighty God, walk before me*, Gen. xvii. 1. *We must walk worthy of the Lord unto all well pleasing.* 2. The consideration of this, that we are in the land of the living, should engage and quicken us to do so. We are spared and continued in the land of the living by the power, and patience, and tender mercy of our God, and therefore must make conscience of our duty to him. The *land of the living* is a land of mercy, which we ought to be thankful for ; it is a land of opportunity, which we should improve. Canaan is called the *land of the living*, Ezek. xxvi. 20. and they whose lot is cast in such a valley of vision, are in a special manner concerned to *set the Lord always before them.* If God has delivered our soul from death, we must walk before him. A new life must be a new life indeed.

10. I believed, therefore have I spoken : I was greatly afflicted. 11. I said in my haste, All men are liars. 12. What shall I render unto the LORD, for all his benefits towards me ? 13. I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. 14. I will pay my vows unto the LORD, now in the presence of all his people. 15. Precious in the sight of the LORD, is the death of his saints. 16. O LORD, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid : thou hast loosed my bonds. 17. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. 18. I will pay my vows unto the LORD, now in the presence of all his people : 19. In the courts of the LORDs house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.

The Septuagint, and some other antient versions, makes these verses a distinct psalm separate from the former ; and some have called it the *Martyrs psalm*, I suppose, for the sake of *ver. 15.*

Three things here David makes confession of :

1. His faith, *ver. 10. I believed, therefore have I spoken.* Which is quoted by the apostle, 2 Cor. iv. 13. with application to himself and his fellow ministers, who, though they suffered for Christ, were not ashamed to own him, David *believed* the being, providence, and promise of God, particularly the assurance God had given him by Samuel, that he should exchange his crook for a sceptre : a great deal of hardship he went through in the belief of this, and therefore *he spoke* : spoke to God by prayer, *ver. 4.* by praise, *ver. 12.* Those that believe in God will address themselves to him. He spoke to himself ; because he believed, he said to his soul, *Return to thy rest.* He spoke to others, told his friends what his hope was, and what the ground of it, though it exasperated Saul against him,

him, and he was greatly afflicted for it. Note, They that believe with the heart, must confess with the mouth, for the glory of God, the encouragement of others, and to evidence their own sincerity, *Rom. x. 10. Acts ix. 19, 20.* They that live in hope of the kingdom of glory, must neither be afraid nor ashamed to own their obligation to him that purchased it for them, *Matt. x. 32.*

2. His fear, *ver. 11. I was greatly afflicted, and then I said in my haste,* somewhat rashly and inconsiderately, in my amazement, so some; when I was in a consternation: *in my flight,* so others; when Saul was in pursuit of me: *all men are liars;* all with whom he had to do, Saul and all his courtiers: his friends, who he thought would have stood by him, deserted him and disowned him when he fell into disgrace at court. And some think it is especially a reflection on Samuel, who had promised him the kingdom, but deceived him: for, saith he, *I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul,* *1 Sam. xxvii. 1.* Observe, 1. The faith of the best of saints is not perfect, nor always alike strong and active. David believed and spoke well, *ver. 10.* but now, through unbelief, he spoke amiss. 2. When we are under great and sore afflictions, especially if they continue long, we are apt to grow weary, to despond, and almost to despair of a good issue. Let us not therefore be harsh in censuring others, but carefully watch over ourselves when we are in trouble, *Psal. xxxix. 1, 2, 3.* 3. If good men speak amiss, it is in their haste, through the surprize of a temptation, not deliberately and with premeditation, as the wicked man who sits in the seat of the scornful, *Psal. i. 1.* sits and speaks against his brother, *Psal. l. 19, 20.* 4. What we speak amiss in haste, we must, by repentance, unsay again; as David, *Psal. xxxi. 22.* and then it shall not be laid to our charge. Some make this to be no ill word of David's. He was greatly afflicted and forced to fly, but he did not trust in man, nor make flesh his arm. No, he said, *All men are liars;* as men of low degree are vanity, so men of high degree are a lye, and therefore my confidence was in God only, and in him I cannot be disappointed. And in this sense the apostle seems to take it, *Rom. iii. 4. Let God be true, and every man a liar,* in comparison with God. All men are fickle and inconstant and subject to change; and therefore let us cease from man and cleave to God.

3. His gratitude, *ver. 12, &c.* God had been better to him than his fears, and had graciously delivered him out of his distresses; and in consideration hereof,

1. He enquires what returns he shall make, *ver. 12. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?* Here he speaks, (1.) As one sensible of many mercies received from God, *all his benefits.* This psalm seems to have been penned upon occasion of some one particular benefit, *ver. 6, 7.* but in that one he saw many, and that one brought many to mind; and therefore now he thinks of all God's benefits towards him. Note, When we speak of God's mercies we should magnify them, and speak highly of them. (2.) As one solicitous and studious how to express his gratitude, *What shall I render unto the Lord?* Not as if he thought he could render any thing proportionable, or as a valuable consideration for what he had received: we can no more pretend to give a recompence to God, than we can to merit any favour from him: but he desired to render something acceptable, something that God would be pleased with, as the acknowledgment of a grateful mind. He asks God, *What shall I render?* asks the priest, asks his friends, or rather, asks himself, and communes with his own heart about it. Note, Having received many benefits from God, we are concerned to enquire, *What we shall render?*

2. He resolves what returns he will make.

1. He will in the most devout and solemn manner offer up his praises and prayers to God, *ver. 13, 17.*

(1.) *I will take the cup of salvation,* i. e. I will offer the drink-offerings appointed by the law in token of my thankfulness to God, and rejoice with my friends in God's goodness to me; this is called *the cup of deliverance,* because drank in memory of the deliverance. The pious Jews had sometimes a *cup of blessing* at their private meals, which the master of the family drank first of, with thanksgiving to God, and all at his table pledged him. But some understand it not of the cup that he would present to God, but the cup God would put into his hand. *I will receive,* 1. The *cup of affliction:* many good interpreters understood it of that cup, that bitter cup, which yet is sanctified to the saints, so that to them it is a *cup of salvation,* *Phil. i. 19. This shall turn to my salvation;* it is a means of spiritual health. David's sufferings were typical of Christ's, and we in ours have communion with his, and his cup was indeed a *cup of salvation.* God having bestowed so many benefits upon me, whatever cup he shall put into my hands I will readily take it, and not dispute it, welcome his holy will. Herein David spoke the language of the Son of David, *John xviii. 11. The cup that my Father hath given me, shall I not take it, and drink it?* 2. The cup of consolation; I will receive the benefits God bestows upon me as from his hand, and taste his love in them, as that which is the portion not only of mine inheritance in the other world, but of my cup in this.

(2.) *I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving;* the thank-offerings which God required, *Lev. vii. 11, 12, &c.* Note, Those

whose hearts are truly thankful will express it in thank-offerings. We must first give our own selves to God as *living sacrifices,* *Rom. xii. 1. 2 Cor. viii. 5.* and then lay out of what we have for his honour in works of piety and charity: *doing good and communicating are sacrifices with which God is well-pleased,* *Heb. xiii. 15, 16.* and this must accompany our giving thanks to his name. If God has been bountiful to us, the least we can do in return, is to be bountiful to the poor, *Psal. xvi. 2, 3.* Why should we offer that to God which costs us nothing?

(3.) *I will call upon the name of the Lord:* This he had promised, *ver. 2.* and here he repeats it, *ver. 13.* and again, *ver. 17.* If we have received kindness from a man like ourselves, we tell him we hope we shall never trouble him again; but God is pleased to reckon the prayers of his people an honour to him, and a delight, and no trouble; and therefore in gratitude for former mercies, we must seek to him for further mercies, and continue to call upon him.

2. He will always entertain good thoughts of God, as very tender of the lives and comforts of his people, *ver. 15. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints,* so precious that he will not gratify Saul or Absalom, or any of David's enemies, with his death, how earnestly soever they desire it. This truth David had comforted himself with in the depth of his distress and danger; and the event having confirmed it, he comforts others with it, that might be in like manner exposed. God has a people, even in this world, that are his saints, his merciful ones, or men of mercy; that have received mercy from him, and shew mercy for his sake. The saints of God are mortal and dying; nay, there are those that desire their death, and labour it all they can, and sometimes prevail to be the death of them: but it is *precious in the sight of the Lord,* i. e. their life is so, *2 Kings i. 13. their blood is so,* *Psal. lxxii. 14.* God oftentimes wonderfully prevents the death of his saints, when there is but a step between them and it; he takes special care about their death, to order it for the best in all the circumstances of it; and whoever kills them, how light soever they may make of it, they shall be made to pay dear for it when inquisition is made for the blood of the saints, *Matt. xxiii. 35.* Though no man lays it to heart when the righteous perish, God will make it to appear that he lays it to heart. This should make us willing to die, to die for Christ if we are called to it, that our death shall be registered in heaven: and let that be precious to us which is so to God.

3. He will oblige himself to be God's servant all his days: Having asked, *What shall I render?* here he surrenders himself, which was *more than all burnt-offerings and sacrifice,* *ver. 16. O Lord, truly I am thy servant.* Here is, 1. The relation in which David professeth to stand to God: *I am thy servant,* i. e. I choose to be so, I resolve to be so, I will live and die in thy service. He had called God's people, who are dear to him, *his saints;* but when he comes to apply it to himself, he doth not say, *Truly I am thy saint,* that looked too high a title to himself, but, *I am thy servant.* David was a king, and yet he glories in this, that he was God's servant. It is no disparagement, but an honour to the greatest kings on earth, to be the servants of the God of heaven. David doth not here compliment with God, as it is common among men to say, *I am your servant,* Sir: No, Lord, I am truly thy servant, *Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I am so.* And he repeats it, as that which he took pleasure in the thoughts of, and which he was resolved to abide by; *I am thy servant, I am thy servant.* Let others serve what master thy will, *truly I am thy servant.* 2. The ground of that relation: two ways men came to be servants, (1.) By birth; Lord, I was born in thy house, I am the son of thine handmaid, and therefore thine. It is a great mercy to be the children of godly parents, as it obligeth us to duty, and is pleadable with God for mercy. (2.) By redemption: He that procured the release of a captive, took him for his servant: Lord, thou hast loosed my bonds, those sorrows of death that compassed me, thou hast discharged me from them, and therefore I am thy servant, and intitled to thy protection, as well as obliged to thy work. *The very bonds which thou hast loosed shall tie me faster unto thee.* Patrick.

4. He will make conscience of paying his vows, and making good what he had promised: not only that he would offer the sacrifices of praise, which he had vowed to bring, but perform all his other engagements to God which he had laid himself under in the day of his affliction, *ver. 14. I will pay my vows;* and again, *ver. 18. now in the presence of all his people.* Note, Vows are debts that must be paid, for it is better not vow, than vow and not pay. He will pay his vows, 1. Presently, he will not, like sorry debtors, delay the payment of them, or beg a day, but I will pay them now, *Eccl. v. 4.* 2. Publickly. He will not huddle up his praises in a corner, but what service he has to do for God he will do it in the presence of all his people; not for ostentation, but to shew that he was not ashamed of the service of God, and that others might be invited to join with him. He will pay his vows in the courts of the tabernacle, where there was a crowd of Israelites attending, in the midst of Jerusalem, that he might bring devotion into more reputation.

P S A L M CXVII.

This psalm is short and sweet; I doubt the reason why we sing it so oft as we do is for the shortness of it; but if we rightly understood and considered it, we would sing it oftner for the sweetness of it, especially to us sinners of the Gentiles, on whom it casts a very favourable eye. Here is, 1. A solemn call to all nations to praise God, ver. 1. 2. Proper matter for that praise suggested, ver. 2. We are soon weary indeed of well doing, if in singing this psalm we keep not up those pious and devout affections with which the spiritual sacrifice of praise ought to be kindled, and kept burning.

1. **O** Praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people. 2. For his merciful kindness is great towards us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD.

There is a great deal of gospel in this psalm. The apostle has furnished us with a key to it, *Rom. xv. 11.* where he quotes it as a proof that the gospel was to be preached to, and would be entertained by, the Gentile nations, which yet was so great a stumbling block to the Jews. Why should that offend them when it is said, and they themselves had often sung it, *Praise the Lord all ye Gentiles, and laud him all ye people.* Some of the Jewish writers confess, that this psalm refers to the kingdom of the Messiah; nay, one of them has a fancy, that it consists of two verses, to signify that in the days of the Messiah God should be glorified by two sorts of people; by the Jews, according to the law of Moses, and by the Gentiles, according to the seven precepts of the sons of Noah, which yet should make one church, as these two verses make one psalm. We have here,

1. The vast extent of the gospel church, *ver. 1.* For many ages in Judah only was God known and his name praised. The sons of Levi and the seed of Israel praised him, but the rest of the nations praised gods of wood and stone, *Dan. v. 4.* while there was no devotion at all paid, at least none openly that we know of, to the living and true God. But here *all nations* are called upon to praise the Lord, which could not be applied to the Old Testament times, both because this call was not then given to any of the Gentile nations, much less to all, in a language they understood; and because unless the people of the land became Jews, and were circumcised, they were not admitted to praise God with them. But the gospel of Christ is ordered to be preached to all nations, and by him the partition wall is taken down, and those that were *afar off* are made *nigh*. This was the mystery which was hid in prophecy for many ages, but was at length revealed in the accomplishment, *that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs*, *Ephes. iii. 3, 6.* Observe here,

(1.) Who should be admitted into the church: *All nations, and all people.* The original words are the same that are used for the *heathen that rage*, and the *people that imagine* against Christ, *Psal. ii. 1.* they that had been enemies to his kingdom, should become his willing subjects. The gospel of the kingdom was to be preached to all the world, for a witness to all nations, *Matth. xxiv. 14.* *Mark xvi. 15.* *All nations shall be called, and to some of all nations the call shall be effectual, and they shall be discipled.*

(2.) How their admission into the church is foretold: By a repeated call to *praise him.* The tidings of the gospel being sent to all nations should give them cause to praise God; the institution of gospel-ordinances would give them leave and opportunity to praise God, and the power of gospel-grace would give them hearts to praise him. Those are highly favoured whom God invites by his Word, and inclines by his Spirit, to praise him, and so makes to be to him for a name and a praise. See *Rev. vii. 9, 10.*

2. The unsearchable riches of *gospel-grace*, which are to be the matter of our praise, *ver. 2.* In the gospel those celebrated attributes of God, his mercy and truth, shine most bright in themselves and most comfortable to us; and the apostle, where he quotes this psalm, takes notice of these as the two great things for which the Gentiles should glorify God, *Rom. xv. 8, 9.* for *the truth of God*, and for *his mercy.* We that enjoy the gospel have reason to praise the Lord, 1. For the power of his mercy; *His merciful kindness is great towards us:* it is *strong*, so the word signifies; it is *mighty* for the pardon of mighty sins, *Amos v. 12.* and for the working out of a mighty salvation. 2. For the perpetuity of his truth; *The truth of the Lord endureth for ever.* It was mercy, meer mercy to the Gentiles, that the gospel was sent among them; it was merciful kindness prevailing towards them above their deserts; and in it the *truth of the Lord*, of his promise made unto the fathers, *endureth for ever*; for though the Jews were hardened and expelled, yet the promise took its effect in the believing Gentiles, the spiritual seed of Abraham. God's mercy is the fountain of all our comforts, and his truth the foundation of all our hopes, and therefore for both we must praise the Lord.

P S A L M CXVIII.

*It is probable David penned this psalm when he had, after many a storm, weathered his point at last, and gained a full possession of the kingdom to which he had been anointed. He then invites and stirs up his friends to join with him, not only in a cheerful acknowledgment of God's goodness, and a cheerful dependence upon that goodness for the future, but in a believing expectation of the promised Messiah, of whose kingdom, and his exaltation to it his were typical: to him, it is certain, the prophet here bears witness in the latter part of the psalm; Christ himself applies it to himself, *Matt. xxi. 42.* and the former part of the psalm may fairly, and without forcing, be accommodated to him and his undertaking. Some think it was first calculated for the solemnity of the bringing of the ark to the city of David, and was afterwards sung at the feast of tabernacles. In it, 1. David calls upon all about him, to give to God the glory of his goodness, *ver. 1, —4.* 2. He encourageth himself and others to trust in God, from the experience he had had of God's power and pity in the great and kind things he had done for him, *ver. 5, —18.* 3. He gives thanks for his advancement to the throne, as it was a figure of the exaltation of Christ, *ver. 19, —23.* 4. The people, the priests, and the psalmist himself triumph in the prospect of the Redeemer's kingdom, *ver. 24, —29.* In singing this psalm we must glorify God for his goodness, his goodness to us, and especially his goodness to us in Jesus Christ.*

1. **O** Give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever. 2. Let Israel now say, that his mercy endureth for ever. 3. Let the house of Aaron now say, that his mercy endureth for ever. 4. Let them now that fear the LORD say, that his mercy endureth for ever. 5. I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me, and set me in a large place. 6. The LORD is on my side, I will not fear: what can man do unto me? 7. The LORD taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me. 8. It is better to trust in the LORD, than to put confidence in man. 9. It is better to trust in the LORD, than to put confidence in princes. 10. All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD will I destroy them. 11. They compassed me about, yea, they compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. 12. They compassed me about like bees, they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. 13. Thou hast thrust sore at me, that I might fall: but the LORD helped me. 14. The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation. 15. The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the LORD doth valiantly. 16. The right hand of the LORD is exalted: the right hand of the LORD doth valiantly. 17. I shall not die but live, and declare the works of the LORD. 18. The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.

It appears here, as often elsewhere, that David had his heart full of the goodness of God; he loved to think of it, loved to speak of it, and was very solicitous that God might have the praise of it, and others the comfort of it. The more our hearts are impressed with a sense of God's goodness, the more they will be enlarged in all manner of obedience. In these verses,

1. He celebrates God's mercy in general, and calls upon others to acknowledge it, from their own experience of it, *ver. 1.* *O give thanks unto the Lord for he is not only good in himself, but good to you; and his mercy endureth for ever*, not only in the everlasting fountain, God himself, but in the neverfailing streams of that mercy which shall run parallel with the longest lines of eternity, and in the chosen vessels of mercy, who will be for ever monuments of it. Israel and the house of Aaron, and all that fear God, were called upon to trust in God, *Psal. cxv. 9, 10, 11.* Here they are called upon to confess that *his mercy endures for ever*, and so to encourage themselves to trust in him, *ver. 2, 3, 4.* priests and people, Jews and proselytes, must all own God's goodness, and all join in the same thankful song: if they can say no more, let them say this for him, that *his mercy endures for ever*, that they have had experience of it all their days, and confide in it for good things that shall last for ever. The praises and thanksgivings of all that truly fear the Lord, shall be as pleasing to him as those of the house of Israel or the house of Aaron.

2. He preserves an account of God's gracious dealings with him in particular, which he communicates to others, that they might

might from thence fetch both songs of praise and supports of faith, and both ways God would have glory. David had, in his time, waded through a great deal of difficulty, which gave him great experience of God's goodness.

Let us therefore observe here,

1. The great distress and danger that he had been in, which he reflects upon, for the magnifying God's goodness to him in his present advancement. There are many who, when they are lifted up, care not for hearing or speaking of their former depressions, but David takes all occasions to remember his own low estate. He was *in distress*, ver. 5. greatly streightened and at a loss; there were many that *hated him*, ver. 7. and that cannot but be a great grief to one of an ingenuous spirit, that strives to gain the good affections of all. *All nations compassed me about*, ver. 10. all the neighbour nations to Israel set themselves to give disturbance to David when he was newly come to the throne, Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, Ammonites, &c. we read of *his enemies round about*, they were confederate against him, and thought to cut off all succours from him. This endeavour of his enemies to surround him is repeated, ver. 11. *They compassed me about, yea, they compassed me about*, which intimates, that they were virulent and violent, and for a time prevalent in their attempts against him, and when put into disorder rallied again, and pushed on their design. *They compassed me about like bees*, so numerous were they, so noisy, so vexatious; they came flying upon him, came upon him in swarms, set upon him with their malignant stings, but it was to their own destruction, as the bee, they say, loseth her life with her sting, *Animamque in vulnere ponit*. Lord, how are they increased that trouble me?

Two ways David was brought into trouble, 1. By the injuries that men did him, ver. 13. *Thou (O enemy) hast thrust sore at me*, with many a desperate push, *that I might fall into sin and into ruin: Thrusting, thou hast thrust at me* (so the word is) so that I was *ready to fall*. Satan is the great enemy that thrusts sore at us by his temptations, to cast us down from our excellency that we may fall from our God, and from our comfort in him; and if God had not upheld us by his grace, his thrusts had been fatal to us. 2. By the afflictions which God laid upon him, ver. 18, *The Lord hath chastened me sore*. Men thrust at him for his destruction, God chastened him for his instruction; they thrust at him with the malice of enemies, God chastened him with the love and tenderness of a father. Perhaps, he refers to the same trouble which God, the author of it, designed for his profit, that by it he *might partake of his holiness*, Heb. xii. 10, 11. howbeit, men, that were the instruments of it meant not so, *neither did their heart think so, but it was in their heart to cut off and destroy*, Isa. x. 7. What men intend for the greatest mischief, God intends for the greatest good, and it is easy to say, whose counsel shall stand: God will sanctify the trouble to his people as it is his chastening, and secure the good he designs, and he will guard them against the trouble, as it is the enemies thrusting, and secure them from the evil they design, and then we need not fear.

This account which David gives of his troubles is very applicable to our Lord Jesus; many there were that *hated him*, hated him without a cause, they *compassed him about*, Jews and Romans surrounded him; they *thrust sore at him*; the devil did so when he tempted him, his persecutors did so when they reviled him; nay, the Lord himself chastened him sore, bruised him and put him to grief, that *by his stripes we might be healed*.

2. The favour God vouchsafed to him in his distress. (1.) God heard his prayer, ver. 5. *He answered me* with enlargements, he did more for me than I was able to ask; he enlarged my heart in prayer, and yet gave more largely than I desired. *He answered me, and set me in a large place* (so we read it) where I had room to bestir myself, room to enjoy my self, and room to thrive: and the *large place* was the more comfortable, because he was brought to it *out of distress*, Psal. iv. 1.

(2.) God baffled the designs of his enemies against him; they are *quenched as the fire of thorns*, ver. 12. which burns furiously for a while, makes a great noise and a great blaze, but is presently out, and cannot do the mischief that it threatened; such was the fury of David's enemies; such is *the laughter of the fool*, like the *crackling of thorns under a pot*, Eccl. vii. 6. and such is the anger of the fool, which therefore is not to be feared, no more than his laughter is to be envied, but both to be pitied. They thrust sore at him, but *the Lord helped him*, ver. 13. helped him to keep his feet, and maintain his ground. Our spiritual enemies had long before this been our ruin, if God had not been our helper.

(3.) God preserved his life when there was but a step between him and death, ver. 18. He hath *chastened me*, but he has not *given me over unto death*, for he has not given me over to the will of my enemies. To this St. Paul seems to refer, 2 Cor. vi. 9. *as dying, and behold we live; as chastened and not killed*. We ought not therefore, when we are chastened sore, presently to despair of life, for God sometimes, in appearance, *turns men to destruction*, and yet *saith, Return; saith unto them, Live*.

This also is applicable to Jesus Christ; God *answered him, and set him in a large place*, quenched the fire of his enemies rage, which did but consume themselves, for *through death he destroyed him that had the power of death*; he helped him through his undertaking; and thus far he did not *give him over unto death*, that

he did not *leave him in the grave*, nor *suffer him to see corruption*. *Death had no dominion over him*.

3. The improvement he made of this favour.

(1.) It encouraged him to trust in God; from his own experience he can say, *It is better*, more wise and more comfortable, and more safe; there is more reason for it, and it will speed better, *to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man*, yea, though it be *in princes*, ver. 8, 9. He that devotes himself to God's conduct and government, with an intire dependence upon God's wisdom, power and goodness, has a better security to make him easy, than if all the kings and potentates of the earth should undertake to protect him.

(2.) It enabled him to triumph in that trust.

1. He triumphs in God, and in his relation to him, and interest in him, ver. 6. *The Lord is on my side*. He is a righteous God, and therefore espouseth my righteous cause, and will plead it. If we are on God's side, he is on ours: if we be for him and with him, he will be for us and with us, ver. 7. *The Lord taketh my part*, and stands up for me, *with them that help me*. He is to me among my helpers, and so one of them; that he is all in all, both to them and me, and without him I could not help my self, nor could any friend I have in the world help me. Thus, ver. 14. *The Lord is my strength, and my song*, i. e. I make him so; without him I am weak and sad, but on him I stay my self as my strength, both for doing and suffering; and in him I solace my self as my song, by which I both express my joy and ease my grief; and making him so, I find him so: he doth strengthen my heart with his graces, and rejoice my heart with his comforts. If God be our strength, he must be our song; if he work all our works in us, he must have all praise and glory from us. God is sometimes the strength of his people when he is not their song; they have spiritual supports when they want spiritual delights; but if he be both to us, we have abundant reason to triumph in him; for if he be our strength and our song, he is become not only our saviour, but our salvation; for his being our strength is our protection to the salvation, and his being our song is an earnest and foretaste of the salvation.

2. He triumphs over his enemies; now shall his head be lifted up above them; for,

(1.) He is sure they cannot hurt him; God is for me, and then *I will not fear what man can do against me*, ver. 6. he can set them all at defiance, and not be disturbed at any of their attempts. They can do nothing to me but what God permits them to do; they can do me no real damage, for they cannot separate between me and God, they cannot do any thing but what God can make to work for my good. The enemy is a man, a depending creature, whose power is limited, and subordinate to a higher power, and therefore I will not fear him. *Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die?* Isa. li. 12. The apostle quotes this with application to all christians, Heb. xiii. 6. they may boldly say, as boldly as David himself, *The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me*; let him do his worst.

(2.) He is sure he shall be too hard for them at last: *I shall see my desire upon them that hate me*, ver. 7. i. e. I shall see them defeated in their designs against me: nay, *In the name of the Lord I will destroy them*, ver. 10, 11, 12. i. e. I trust in the name of the Lord that I shall destroy them; and in his name I will go forth against them, depending on his strength, by warrant from him, and with an eye to his glory, not confiding in my self, or taking vengeance for my self. Thus he went forth against Goliath, *in the name of the God of Israel*, 1 Sam. xvii. 45. David saith this as a type of Christ, who triumphed over the powers of darkness, destroyed them, and *made a shew of them openly*.

3. He triumphs in an assurance of the continuance of his comfort, his victory, and his life.

(1.) Of his comfort, ver. 15. *The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous*, and in mine particularly, in my family. The dwellings of the righteous in this world are but tabernacles, mean and moveable: here we have no city, *no continuing city*. But these tabernacles are more comfortable to them, than the palaces of the wicked are to them; for in the house where religion rules, 1. There is salvation; safety from evil, earnestness of eternal salvation, which *is come to this house*, Luke xix. 9. 2. Where there is salvation, there is cause for rejoicing, for continual joy in God. Holy joy is called the joy of salvation, for in that there is abundant matter for joy. 3. Where there is rejoicing, there ought to be *the voice of rejoicing*, i. e. praise and thanksgiving. Let God be served with joyfulness and gladness of heart, and let the voice of that rejoicing be heard daily in our families, to the glory of God, and the encouragement of others.

(2.) Of his victory. *The right hand of the Lord doth valiantly*, ver. 15. and *is exalted*; for (as some read it) *it has exalted me*. The right hand of God's power is engaged for his people, and it acts vigorously for them, and therefore victoriously: For what difficulty can stand before the divine valour? We are weak, and act but cowardly for our selves; but God is mighty, and acts valiantly for us, with jealousy and resolution, Isa. lxiii. 5, 6. There is spirit as well as strength in all God's operations for his people. And when God's right hand doth valiantly for our salvation, it ought to be exalted in our praises.

(3.) Of

(3.) Of his life, *ver. 17. I shall not die* by the hands of my enemies that seek my life; *but live and declare the works of the Lord*, i. e. I shall live a monument of God's mercy and power, his works shall be declared in me; and I will make it the business of my life to praise and magnify God, looking upon that as the end of my preservation. Note, It is not worth while to live for any other purpose but to *declare the works of God*, for his honour, and the encouragement of others to serve him, and trust in him. Such as these were the triumphs of the Son of David, in the assurance he had of the success of his undertakings; and that the *good pleasure of the Lord* should prosper in his hand.

19. Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD: 20. This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter. 21. I will praise thee, for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. 22. The stone which the builders refused, is become the head stone of the corner. 23. This is the LORD's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes. 24. This is the day which the LORD hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it. 25. Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. 26. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD. 27. God is the LORD, which hath shewed us light; bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar. 28. Thou art my God, and I will praise thee; thou art my God, I will exalt thee. 29. O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

We have here an illustrious prophecy of the humiliation and exaltation of our Lord Jesus, his sufferings, and the glory that should follow. Peter thus applied it to the faces of the chief priests and scribes, and none of them could charge him with misapplying it, *Acts iv. 11.* Now observe here,

1. The preface with which this precious prophecy is introduced, *ver. 19, 20, 21.* (1.) The psalmist desires admission into the sanctuary of God, there to celebrate the glory of him *that cometh in the name of the Lord.* Open to me the gates of righteousness. So the temple gates are called, because they were shut against the uncircumcised, and forbid the stranger to come nigh; as the sacrifices there offered are called sacrifices of righteousness. Those that would enter into communion with God in holy ordinances, must become humble suitors to God for admission. And when the gates of righteousness are opened to us, we must *go into them*, must enter into the holiest as far as we have leave, and *praise the Lord.* Our business within God's gates is to praise God; therefore we should long till the gates of heaven be opened to us, that we may go into them to dwell in God's house above, where we shall be still praising him. (2.) He sees admission granted him, *ver. 20. This is the gate of the Lord*, the gate of his appointing, *into which the righteous shall enter*, q. d. the gate you knocked at is opened, and you are welcome. *Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* Some, by this gate, understand Christ, by whom we are taken into fellowship with God, and our praises are accepted: he is *the way*, no coming to the Father but by him, *John xiv. 6.* he is *the door of the sheep*, *John x. 9.* he is the gate of the temple, by whom, and by whom only, the righteous, and they only, shall enter, and come into God's righteousness, as the expression is, *Psal. lxxix. 27.* The psalmist triumphs in the discovery, that the gate of righteousness, which had been so long shut, and so long knocked at, was now at length opened. (3.) He promiseth to give thanks to God for this favour, *ver. 21. I will praise thee.* They that saw Christ's day at so great a distance, saw cause to praise God for the prospect; for in him they saw that God had heard them, had heard the prayers of the Old Testament saints, for the coming of the Messiah, and would be their salvation.

2. The prophecy it self, *ver. 22, 23.* This may have some reference to David's preferment; he was the stone whom Saul and his courtiers rejected, but was, by the wonderful providence of God, advanced to be the head stone of the building: but its principal reference is to Christ: and here we have,

(1.) His humiliation; he is *the stone which the builders refused*; he is *the stone cut out of the mountain without hands*, *Dan. ii. 34.* He is a stone, not only for strength and firmness, and duration, but for life, in the building of the spiritual temple; and yet a precious stone, *1 Pet. ii. 6.* for the foundation of the Gospel church must be sapphires, *Isa. liv. 11.* This stone was *rejected by the builders*, i. e. by the rulers and people of the Jews, *Acts iv. 8, 10, 11.* they refused to own him as the stone, the Messiah promised; they would not build their faith upon him, nor join themselves to him; they would make no use of him, but go on in their building without him; they *denied him in the presence of Pilate*, *Acts iii. 13.* when they said, *We have no king but Caesar.* They trampled upon this stone, threw it among the rubbish out of the

city; nay, they stumbled at it. This was a disgrace to Christ; but it proved the ruin of those that thus made light of him. Rejecters of Christ are rejected of God.

(2.) His exaltation; he is *become the head stone of the corner*, i. e. he is advanced to the highest degree both of honour and usefulness, to be above all, and all in all. He is the chief corner stone in the foundation, in whom Jew and Gentile are united; that they may be built up one holy house. He is the chief top stone in the corner, in whom the building is compleated, and who must in all things have the preeminence; as the *author and finisher of our faith.* Thus highly *bath God exalted him, because he humbled himself*; and we, in compliance with God's design, must make him the foundation of our hope, the centre of our unity, and the end of our living: *To me to live is Christ.*

(3.) The hand of God in all this. *This is the Lord's doing*, it is from the Lord, it is with the Lord: it is the product of his council, it is his contrivance, both the humiliation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus was his work, *Acts ii. 23. iv. 27, 28.* He sent him, sealed him, his hand went with him throughout his whole undertaking, and from first to last he did his Father's will; and this ought to be *marvellous in our eyes.* Christ's name is Wonderful; and the redemption he wrought out is the most amazing of all God's works of wonder; it is what the angels desire to look into, and will be admiring to eternity; much more ought we to admire it, who owe our all to it. *Without controversy, great is this mystery of godliness.*

3. The joy wherewith it is entertained, and the acclamations which attend this prediction.

(1.) Let the day be solemnized to the honour of God with great joy, *ver. 24. This is the day the Lord has made.* The whole time of the Gospel dispensation, that *accepted time*, that *day of salvation*, is what the Lord has made so; it is a continual feast, which ought to be kept with joy. Or, it may very fitly be understood of the Christian sabbath, which we sanctify in remembrance of Christ's resurrection, when the rejected stone began to be exalted: and so, 1. Here is the doctrine of the Christian sabbath; *It is the day which the Lord hath made*, has made remarkable, made holy, has distinguished it from other days; he has made it for man: it is therefore called the Lord's day, for it bears his image and superscription. 2. The duty of the sabbath; the work of the day that is to be done in his day, *we will rejoice and be glad in it*; not only in the institution of the day, that there is such a day appointed, but in the occasion of it, Christ's becoming *the head of the corner.* This we ought to rejoice in, both as his honour, and our advantage. Sabbath days must be rejoicing days, and then they are to us as the days of heaven: See what a good master we serve, who having instituted a day for his service, appoints it to be spent in holy joy.

(2.) Let the exalted Redeemer be met and attended with joyful hosanna's, *ver. 25, 26.*

1. Let him have the acclamations of the people, as is usual at the inauguration of a prince; let every one of his loyal subjects shout for joy; *Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord.* This is like *vivat rex*, and speaks both a hearty joy for his accession to the crown, an entire satisfaction in his government, and a zealous affection to the interests and honour of it. Hosanna signifies, *Save now, I beseech thee.* (1.) Lord, save me, I beseech thee; let this saviour be my saviour; and, in order to that, my ruler; let me be taken under his protection, and owned as one of his willing subjects. His enemies are my enemies; Lord, I beseech thee, save me from them. Send me an interest in that prosperity which his kingdom brings with it to all those that entertain it. Let my soul prosper, and be in health, in that peace and righteousness which his government brings, *Psal. lxxii. 3.* Let me have victory over those lusts *that war against my soul*, and let divine grace go on in my heart, *conquering, and to conquer.* (2.) Lord, preserve him, I beseech thee, even the Saviour himself, and *send him prosperity* in all his undertakings; give success to his gospel, and let it be *mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds*, and reducing souls to their allegiance to him. Let his name be sanctified, his *kingdom come*, his *will be done*: thus let prayer be made for him continually, *Psal. lxxii. 15.* On the Lord's day, when we rejoice and are glad in his kingdom, we must pray for the advancement of it more and more, and its establishment upon the ruins of the devil's kingdom. When Christ made his publick entry into Jerusalem, he was thus met by his well-wishers, *Matt. xxi. 9. Hosanna to the Son of David*, long live king Jesus; let him reign for ever.

2. Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, do their part in this great solemnity, *ver. 26.* (1.) Let them bless the prince with their praises; *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.* Jesus Christ is he that cometh; *ὁ ἐρχόμενος*, he that was to come, and is yet to come again, *Rev. i. 8.* He comes in the name of the Lord, with a commission from him, to act for him, to do his will, and to seek his glory: and therefore we must say, *Blessed be he that cometh*, i. e. we must rejoice that he is come, we must speak well of him, admire him, and esteem him highly, as one we are eternally obliged to; call him blessed Jesus, blessed for ever, *Psal. xlv. 2.* We must bid him welcome into our hearts, saying, Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; come in by thy grace and Spirit, and take possession of me for thine own. Bless his faithful ministers

sters that come in his name, and receive them for his sake, *Isa. lii. 7. John xiii. 20.* We must pray for the enlargement and edification of his church; for the ripening of things for his second coming; and then, that he who hath said, *Surely I come quickly, would even so come.* (2.) Let them bless the people with their prayers: we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord: Christ's ministers are not only warranted, but appointed, to pronounce a blessing in his name upon all his loyal subjects that love him, and his government, in sincerity, *Eph. vi. 24.* We assure you, that in and through Jesus Christ you are blessed; for he came to bless you; you are blessed out of the house of the Lord, i. e. with spiritual blessings in heavenly places, *Eph. i. 3.* and therefore have reason to bless him, who hath thus blessed you.

3. Let sacrifices of thanksgiving be offered to his honour, who offered for us the great atoning sacrifice, *ver. 27.* Here is, 1. The privilege we enjoy by Jesus Christ; *God is the Lord which hath shewed us light*; God is Jehovah, is known by that name, a God performing what he hath promised, and perfecting what he hath begun, *Exod. vi. 3.* He hath shewed us light, i. e. he hath given us the knowledge of himself and his will; he hath shined upon us, so some; hath favoured us, and lifted up upon us the light of his countenance; he hath given us occasion for joy and rejoicing, which is the light to the soul, by giving us a prospect of everlasting light in heaven. *The day which the Lord hath made brings light with it, true light.* 2. The duty which this privilege calls for; *Bind the sacrifice with cords*, that, being killed, the blood of it may be sprinkled upon the horns of the altar, according to the law; or, perhaps, it was the custom (though we read not of it elsewhere) to bind the sacrifice to the horns of the altar, while things were getting ready for the slaying of it. Or this may have a peculiar significance here; the sacrifice we are to offer to God, in gratitude for redeeming love, is our selves, not to be slain upon the altar, but living sacrifices, *Rom. xii. 1.* to be bound to the altar; spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, in which our hearts must be fixed and engaged, as the sacrifice was bound with cords to the horns of the altar, not to start back.

Lastly, The psalmist concludes with his own thankful acknowledgments of divine grace, in which he calls upon others to join with him, *ver. 28, 29.* 1. He will praise God himself, and endeavour to exalt him, in his own heart, and in the hearts of others, and this because of his covenant relation to him, and interest in him: *Thou art my God*, on whom I depend, and to whom I am devoted, who ownest me, and art owned by me, and therefore *I will praise thee.* 2. He will have all about him to give thanks to God for this glad tidings of great joy to all people, that there is a Redeemer, even Christ the Lord, and in him it is that God is good to man, and that his mercy endureth for ever; in him the covenant of grace is made, and in him it is made sure, made good, and made an everlasting covenant. He concludes this psalm as he began it, *ver. 1.* for God's glory must be the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, of all our addresses to him. *Hallowed be thy name, and thine is the glory.* And this fitly closeth a prophecy of Christ: the angels give thanks for man's redemption, *Glory to God in the highest*, *Luke ii. 14.* for there is on earth peace, to which we must echo with our hosanna's, as they did, *Luke xix. 38.* Peace in heaven to us through Christ, and therefore *Glory in the highest.*

P S A L M CXIX.

This is a psalm by itself, like none of the rest, it excels them all, and shines brightest in this constellation. It is much longer than any of them; more than twice as long as any of them. It is not making long prayers that Christ censures, but making them for a pretence; which intimates, that they are in themselves good and commendable. It seems to me to be a collection of David's pious and devout ejaculations, the short and sudden breathings and elevations of his soul to God, which he wrote down as they occurred, and, towards the latter end of his time, gathered them out of his day-book where they lay scattered, added to them many like words, and digested them into this psalm, in which there is seldom any coherence between the verses, but, like Solomon's proverbs, it is a chest of gold rings, not a chain of gold links. And we may not only learn by the psalmist's example to accustom ourselves to such pious ejaculations, which are an excellent means of maintaining constant communion with God, and keeping the heart in frame for the more solemn exercises of religion, but we must make use of the psalmist's words, both for the exciting, and for the expressing of our devout affections: and it is true what some have said of this psalm, *He that shall read it considerately, it will either warm him, or shame him.* 1. The composition of it is singular and very nice. It is divided into twenty-two parts, according to the number of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and each part consists of eight verses; all the verses of the first part beginning with Aleph, all the verses of the second with Beth, and so on, without any flaw, throughout the whole psalm. Archbishop Tillotson saith, *It seems to have more of poetical skill and number in it, than we at this distance can easily understand.* Some have called it the saints alphabet; and it were to be wished we had it as ready in our memories, as the very let-

ters of our alphabet, as ready as our A B C. Perhaps, the penman found it of use to himself, to observe this method, as it obliged him to sink for thoughts, and search for them, that he might fill up the quota of every part; and the letter he was to begin with, might lead him to a word which might suggest a good sentence; and all little enough to raise any thing that is good in the barren soil of our hearts. However, it would be of use to the learners, a help to them, both in committing it to memory, and in calling it to mind upon occasion; by the letter the first word would be got, and that would bring in the whole verse: Thus young people would the easier learn it by heart, and retain it the better even in old age. If any censure it as childish and trifling, because acrosticks are now quite out of fashion, let them know that the royal psalmist despiseth their censure; he is a teacher of babes, and if this method may be beneficial to them, he can easily stoop to it; if this be to be vile, he will be yet more vile. 2. The general scope and design of it is to magnify the law, and make it honourable; to set forth the excellency and usefulness of divine revelation, and to recommend it to us, not only for the entertainment, but for the government of ourselves, by the psalmist's own example, who speaks by experience of the benefit of it, and of the good impressions made upon him by it; for which he praiseth God, and earnestly prays, from first to last, for the continuance of God's grace with him, to direct and quicken him in the way of his duty. There are ten several words by which divine revelation is called in this psalm; and they are upon the matter synonymous, each of them expressive of the whole compass of it, both that which tells us what God expects from us, and that which tells us what we may expect from him; and of the system of religion which is founded upon it, and guided by it. The things contained in the scripture, and drawn from it, are here called, 1. God's law, because they are enacted by him as our sovereign. 2. His way, because they are the rule both of his providence, and our obedience. 3. His testimonies, because they are solemnly declared to the world, and attested beyond contradiction. 4. His commandments, because given with authority, and (as the word signifies) lodged with us as a trust. 5. His precepts, because prescribed to us, and not left indifferent. 6. His word, or saying, because it is the declaration of his mind, and Christ the essential, eternal Word, is all in all in it. 7. His judgments, because framed in infinite wisdom, and because by them we must both judge and be judged. 8. His righteousness, because it is all holy, just and good, and the rule and standard of righteousness. 9. His statutes, because they are fixed and determined, and of perpetual obligation. 10. His truth or faithfulness, because the principles upon which the divine law is built, are eternal truths. And I think there is but one verse (it is *ver. 122.*) in all this long psalm, in which there is not one or other of these ten words; only in three or four they are used concerning God's providence, or David's practice, as *ver. 75, 84, 121.* and *ver. 132.* They are called God's name. The great esteem and affection David had for the word of God, is the more admirable, considering how little he had of it, in comparison with what we have; no more, perhaps, in writing, than the first books of Moses, which were but the dawning of this day; which may shame us who enjoy the full discoveries of divine revelation, and yet are so cold towards it. In singing this psalm, there is work for all the devout affections of a sanctified soul; so copious, so various is the matter of it. We here find that in which we must give glory to God, both as our ruler and great benefactor; and that in which we are to teach and admonish ourselves and one another; so many are the instructions which we here find about a religious life; and to comfort and encourage ourselves and one another; so many are the sweet experiences of one that lived such a life. Here is something or other to suit the case of every christian. Is any afflicted? is any merry? each will find that here that is proper for them. And it is so far from being a tedious repetition of the same thing, as may seem to those who look over it cursorily, that if we duly meditate upon it, we shall find almost every verse has a new thought, and something in it very lively. And this, as many other of David's psalms, teach us to be sententious in our devotions, both alone, and when others join with us; for ordinarily the affections, especially of weaker christians, are more likely to be raised and kept by short expressions, the sense of which lies in a little room, than by long and laboured periods.

I. ALEPH.

1. **B**lessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD. 2. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. 3. They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.

The psalmist here shews that godly people are happy people; they are and shall be blessed indeed. Felicity is the thing we all pretend to aim at and pursue; he doth not say here wherein it consists; it is enough for us to know what we must do and be, that we may attain to it, and that we are here told. All men would be happy, but few take the right way; God has here laid before us the right way, which we may be sure will end in happiness, though

though it be strait and narrow. Blessednesses are to the righteous ; all manner of blessedness.

Now observe the characters of the happy people.

1. They are happy that make the will of God the rule of all their actions, and govern themselves in their whole conversation by that rule ; they *walk in the law of the Lord*, ver. 1. i. e. God's word is a law to them ; not only in this or that particular instance, but in the whole course of their conversations ; they walk within the hedges of that law, which they dare not break through by doing any thing it forbids ; and they walk in the paths of that law, which they will not trifle in, but *press forward*, in them, *towards the mark*, taking every step by rule, and never walking at all adventures. This is *walking in God's ways*, ver. 3. the ways which he has marked out to us, and has appointed us to walk in. It will not serve us to make religion the subject of our talk, but we must make it the rule of our walk. *Walk in his ways*, not in the way of the world, or of our own hearts, *Job xxiii. 10, 11. xxxi. 7.*

2. That are upright and honest in their religion ; *Undefiled in the way* ; not only that keep themselves pure from the pollutions of actual sin, *unspotted from the world*, but that are habitually sincere in their intentions ; *in whose spirit there is no guile* ; who are really as good as they seem to be, and row the same way they look.

3. That are true to the trust reposed in them as God's professing people. It was the honour of the Jews, that *to them were committed the oracles of God* ; and blessed are they who preserve pure and intire that sacred depositum ; *that keep his testimonies*, as a treasure of inestimable value, keep them as the apple of their eye ; so keep them as to carry the comfort of them themselves to another world, and leave the knowledge and profession of them to those that shall come after them in this world. They that would *walk in the law of the Lord*, must *keep his testimonies*, i. e. his truths : those will not long make conscience of good practices, that do not adhere to good principles. Or, *his testimonies*, i. e. his covenant : the ark of the covenant is called the ark of the testimony ; those do not keep covenant with God, that do not keep the commandments of God.

4. That have a single eye to God as their chief good, and highest end, in all they do in religion, ver. 2. They *seek him with their whole heart*. They do not seek themselves and their own things, but God only ; this is that which they aim at, that God may be glorified in their obedience, and that they may be happy in God's acceptance. He is, and will be the rewarder, the reward of all those that thus *seek him diligently, seek him with the heart* ; for that is it that God looks at and requires ; and *with the whole heart* ; for if the heart be divided between him and the world, it is faulty.

5. That carefully avoid all sin, ver. 3. *They do no iniquity*, i. e. they do not allow themselves in any sin, they do not commit it as those do that are the servants of sin ; they do not make a practice of it, do not make a trade of it ; they are conscious to themselves of much iniquity that clogs them in the ways of God, but not of that iniquity which draws them out of those ways : Blessed and holy are they who thus exercise themselves *to have always consciences void of offence*.

4. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. 5. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes ! 6. Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

We are here taught,

1. To own ourselves under the highest obligations to walk in God's law : The tempter would possess men with an opinion, that they are at their liberty whether they will make the word of God their rule or no ; that though it may be good, yet it is not so necessary as they are made to believe it is : He taught our first parents to question the command ; *Hath God said, Ye shall not eat ?* And therefore we are concerned to be well established in this, ver. 4. *Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts*, to make religion our rule, and *to keep them diligently* ; to make religion our business, and to mind it carefully and constantly. We are bound, and must obey at our peril.

2. To look up to God for wisdom and grace to do so, ver. 5. *O that my ways were directed* accordingly ! i. e. not only that all events concerning us may be so ordered and disposed by the providence of God, as not to be in any thing a hindrance to us, but a furtherance rather in the service of God, but that our hearts may be so guided and influenced by the Spirit of God, as that we may not in any thing transgress God's commandments : not only that our eyes may be directed to behold God's statutes, but our hearts directed to keep them. See how the desires and prayer of a good man exactly agrees with the will and command of a good God. Thou wouldst have me keep thy precepts, and, Lord, I fain would keep them. *This is the will of God, even our sanctification* ; and it should be our will.

3. To encourage ourselves in the way of our duty, with a prospect of the comfort we shall find in it, ver. 6. Note, 1. It is the undoubted character of every good man, that he hath a *respect to all God's commandments*. He hath a respect to the command, eyes it as his copy, and aims to conform to it ; is sorry wherein he comes short ; and what he doth in religion, doth it in conscience

of the command, because it is his duty. He hath *respect to all the commandments*, one as well as another, because they are all backed with the same authority, *Jam. ii. 10, 11.* and all levelled at the same end, the glorifying of God is our happiness : Those that have a sincere respect to any command, will have a general respect to every command ; to the commands of both testaments and both tables ; to the prohibitions and the precepts ; to those that concern both the inward and the outward man ; both the head and the heart ; to those that forbid the most pleasant and gainful sins ; and to those that require the most difficult and hazardous duties : 2. Those that have a sincere *respect to all God's commandments* ; *shall not be ashamed* ; not only they will thereby be kept from doing that which will turn to their shame, but they shall have *confidence towards God*, and boldness of access to the throne of his grace ; *1 John iii. 21* : They shall have credit before men, their honesty will be their honour ; and they shall have clearness and courage in their own souls ; they shall not be ashamed to retire into themselves, nor to reflect upon themselves, for their hearts shall not condemn them. David speaks this with application to himself ; they that are upright, may take the comfort of their uprightness ; as if I be wicked, wo to me ; so if I be sincere, it is well with me.

7. I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments. 8. I will keep thy statutes : O forsake me not utterly.

Here is, 1. David's endeavour to perfect himself in his religion ; and to make himself (as we say) master of his business. He hopes to *have learned God's righteous judgments* ; he knew much, but he was still pressing forward, and desired to know more, as knowing this, that *he had not yet attained* ; but as far as perfection is attainable in this life, he reacheth towards it, and will not take up short of it. As long as we live we must be scholars in Christ's school, and sit at his feet ; but we should aim to be head-scholars, and to get into the highest form. God's judgments are all righteous, and therefore it is desirable not only to learn them, but to be learned in them, *mighty in the scriptures*.

2. The use he would make of his divine learning. He coveted to be learned in the laws of God, not that he might make himself a name and interest among men, or fill his own head with entertaining speculations, but, 1. That he might give God the glory of his learning ; *I will praise thee, when I have learned thy judgments* ; intimating, that he could not learn, unless God taught him ; and that divine instructions are special blessings, which we have reason to be thankful for : though Christ keeps a free-school, and teacheth without money ; and without price, yet he expects his scholars should give him thanks both for his Word and for his Spirit ; sure it is a mercy worth thanks to be taught so gainful a calling as religion is. And those have learned a good lesson that have learned to praise God, for that is the work of angels, the work of heaven. It is an easy thing to praise God in word and tongue ; but those only are well learned in this mystery, that have learned to *praise him with uprightness of heart*, i. e. are inward with him in praising of him, and sincerely aim at his glory in the course of their conversation, as well as in the exercises of devotion. God accepts only the praises of the upright. 2. That he might himself come under the government of that learning. *When I shall have learned thy righteous judgments, I will keep thy statutes*. We cannot keep them, unless we learn them ; but we learn them in vain, if we do not keep them. Those have well learned God's statutes, that are come up to a full resolution, in the strength of his grace, to keep them.

3. His prayer to God not to leave him : *O forsake me not*, i. e. leave me not to my self, withdraw not thy Spirit and grace from me, for then *I shall not keep thy statutes*. Good men see themselves undone, if God forsakes them ; for then the tempter will be too hard for them. Though thou seem to forsake me, and threaten to forsake me, and dost for a time withdraw from me, yet let not the desertion be total and final ; for that is hell. *O forsake me not utterly* ; for wo unto me, if God departs from me.

2. BETH.

9. Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way ? by taking heed *thereto* according to thy word.

Here is, 1. A weighty question asked, by what means the next generation may be made better than this ? *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way ?* Cleansing implies that it is polluted. Besides the original corruption we all brought into the world with us (from which we are not cleansed unto this day) there are many particular sins which young people are subject to, by which they defile their way ; *Youthful lusts*, 2 Tim. ii. 22. these render the way offensive to God, and disgraceful to themselves. Young men are concerned to cleanse their way, i. e. to get their hearts renewed, and their lives reformed ; to make clean, and keep clean, from the *corruption that is in the world through lust*, that they may have both a good conscience and a good name. Few young people do themselves enquire, by what means they may recover and preserve their purity ; and therefore David asks the question for them.

2. A satisfactory answer given to this question. Young men may effectually *cleanse* their way, by *taking heed thereto according to the word of God*; and it is the honour of the word of God, that it has such power, and is of such use both to particular persons and to communities, whose happiness lies much in the virtue of their youth. 1. Young men must make the word of God their rule, must acquaint themselves with it, and resolve to conform themselves to it: that will do more towards the cleansing of young men, than the laws of princes, or the morals of philosophers. 2. They must carefully apply that rule, and make use of it; they must take heed to their way, must examine it by the word of God, as a touchstone and standard; must rectify what is amiss in it by that regulator, and steer by that chart and compass. God's word will not do without our watchfulness, and a constant regard both to it and to our way, that we may compare them together. The ruin of young men is either living at large, or by no rule at all, or choosing to themselves false rules; let them ponder the path of their feet, and walk by scripture rules, so that their way be clean, and they shall have the comfort and credit of it here and for ever.

10. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.

Here is, 1. David's experience of a good work God had wrought in him, which he takes the comfort of, and pleads with God. *I have sought thee*, sought to thee as my oracle, sought after thee as my happiness, sought thee as my God; for *should not a people seek unto their God?* If I have not yet found thee, *I have sought thee*, and thou never faidst, seek in vain, nor wilt say so to me, for *I have sought thee with my heart, with my whole heart*; sought thee only, sought thee diligently.

2. His prayer for the preservation of that work; thou that hast inclined me to seek thy precepts, never suffer me to *wander from them*. The best are sensible of their aptness to wander; and the more we have found of the pleasure there is in keeping God's commandments, the more afraid we shall be of wandering from them, and the more earnest we shall be in prayer to God for his grace to prevent our wanderings.

11. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

Here is, 1. The close application which David made of the word of God to himself; *he hid it in his heart*, laid it up there, that it might be ready to him, whenever he had occasion to use it: he laid it up, as that which he valued highly, and had a dear love for, and which he was afraid of losing, and being robbed of. God's word is a treasure worth laying up, and there is no laying it up safe but in our hearts; if we have it only in our houses and hands, enemies may take it from us; if only in our heads, our memories may fail us; but if our hearts be delivered into the mould of it, and the impressions of it remain on our souls, it is safe.

2. The good uses he designed to make of it; *that I might not sin against thee*. Good men are afraid of sin, and are in care to prevent it; and the most effectual way to prevent it, is to hide God's word in our hearts, that we may answer every temptation, as our Master did, with *it is written*; may oppose God's precepts to the dominion of sin, his promises to its allurements, and his threatnings to its menaces.

12. Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.

Here, 1. David gives glory to God: *Blessed art thou, O Lord*. Thou art infinitely happy in the enjoyment of thy self, and hast no need of me or my services; yet thou art pleased to reckon thy self honoured by them; assist me therefore, and then accept me. In all our prayers we should intermix praises.

2. He asks grace from God. *Teach me thy statutes*, i. e. give me to know and do my duty in every thing. Thou art the fountain of all blessedness; O let me have this drop from that fountain, this blessing from that blessedness. *Teach me thy statutes*; that I may know how to bless thee who art a blessed God, and that I may be blessed in thee.

13. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth. 14. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as *much as* in all riches. 15. I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. 16. I will delight my self in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

Here, 1. David looks back with comfort upon the respect he had paid to the word of God. He had the testimony of his conscience for him;

(1.) That he had edified others with what he had been taught out of the word of God, *ver. 13. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth*. This he did not only as a king in making orders, and giving judgment according to the word of God, nor only as a prophet by his psalms, but in his common discourse.

Thus he shewed how full he was of the word of God, and what a holy pride he took in his acquaintance with it; for it is *out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks*. Thus he did good with his knowledge; he did not hide God's word from others, but hide it for them; and, out of that *good treasure in his heart*, brought forth good things, as the householder out of his store, *things new and old*. They, whose hearts are fed with the bread of life, should with their lips feed many. He had prayed, *ver. 12. that God would teach him*; and here he pleads, Lord, I have endeavoured to make a good use of the knowledge thou hast given me, therefore increase it; for *to him that hath shall be given*.

(2.) That he had entertained himself with it. *Lord, teach me thy statutes*; for I desire no greater pleasure than to know and do them, *ver. 14. I have rejoiced in the way of thy commandments*, i. e. in a constant even course of obedience to thee; not only in the speculations and histories of thy word, but in the precepts of it, and in that path of serious godliness which they chalk out to me. *I have rejoiced in this, as much as in all riches*; as much as ever any worldlying rejoiced in the increase of his wealth. In the way of God's commandments I can truly say, *Soul, take thine ease*; in true religion there is all riches, the unfearchable riches of Christ.

2. He looks forward with a holy resolution never to cool in his affection to the word of God; what he *doth, that he will do*, 2 Cor. xi. 12. they that have found pleasure in the ways of God, are likely to proceed, and persevere in them.

(1.) He will dwell much upon them in his thoughts, *ver. 15. I will meditate in thy precepts*. He not only discoursed of them to others, many do that only to shew their knowledge and authority, but he communed with his own heart about them, and took pains to digest in his own thoughts what he had declared, or had to declare to others. Note, God's words ought to be very much the subject of our thoughts.

(2.) He will have them always in his eye. *I will have respect unto thy ways*, as the traveller has to his road, which he is in care not to miss, and always aims and endeavours to hit. We do not meditate on God's precepts to good purposes, unless we have respect to them as our rule, and our good thoughts produce good works, and good intentions in them.

(3.) He will take a constant pleasure in communion with God, and obedience to him. It is not for a season that he rejoiceth in this light, but *I will still, I will for ever delight myself in thy statutes*; not only think of them, but do them with delight, *ver. 16. David took more delight in God's statutes, than in the pleasures of his court, or the honours of his camp*; more than in his sword or in his harp: when the law is written in the heart, duty becomes a delight.

(4.) He will never forget what he has learned of the things of God; *I will not forget thy word*; not only I will not quite forget it, but I will be mindful of it, when I have occasion to use it. They that meditate in God's word, and delight in it, are in no great danger of forgetting it.

3. GIMEL.

17. Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.

We are here taught,

1. That we owe our lives to God's mercy. David prays, *Deal bountifully with me, that I may live*. It was God's bounty that gave us life, that gave us this life; and the same bounty that gave it, continues it, and gives all the supports and comforts of it; which if withheld we die; or, which is equivalent, our lives are embittered, and we are become weary of them. If God deals in strict justice with us, we die, we perish, we all perish; if these forfeited lives be preserved and prolonged, it is because God deals bountifully with us, according to his mercy, not according to our deserts. The continuance of the most useful life is owing to God's bounty, and on that we must have a continual dependence.

2. That therefore we ought to spend our lives in God's service. Life is therefore a choice mercy, because it is an opportunity of obeying God in this world, where there are so few that do glorify him; and this David had in his eye; not *that I may live* and grow rich, live and be merry; but *that I may live, and keep thy word*, may observe it my self, and transmit it to those that shall come after, which the longer I live, the better I shall do.

18. Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

Observe here,

1. That there are *wondrous things* in God's law, which we are all concerned, and should covet to *behold*; not only strange things, which are very surprizing and unexpected, but excellent things, which are to be highly esteemed and valued, and things which were long *hid from the wise and prudent*, but are now *revealed unto babes*. If there were wonders in the law, much more in the gospel, where Christ is all in all, whose name is Wonderful. Well may we, who are so nearly interested, desire to behold these wondrous things, when the angels themselves reach *to look into them*, 1 Pet. i. 12.

2. Those

2. Those that would see the wondrous things of God's law and gospel, must beg of him to *open their eyes*, and to give them an understanding. We are by nature blind to the things of God, till his grace causes the scales to fall from our eyes; and even those in whose hearts God hath said, *Let there be light*, have yet need to be further enlightened, and must still pray to God to open their eyes yet more and more, that they, who at first *saw men as trees walking*, may come to *see all things clearly*: and the more God opens our eyes, the more wonders we see in the word of God, which we saw not before.

19. *I am a stranger in the earth, hide not thy commandments from me.*

Here we have,

1. The acknowledgment which David makes of his own condition; *I am a stranger in the earth*. We all are so, and all good people confess themselves to be so; for heaven is their home, and the world is but their inn, the land of their pilgrimage. David was a man that knew as much of the world, and was as well known in it, as most men: God built him a house, established his throne; strangers submitted to him, and people that he had not known served him; he had a name like the names of the great men, and yet he calls himself a stranger. We are all strangers on earth, and must so account our selves.

2. The request he makes to God thereupon: *Hide not thy commandments from me*; he means more; Lord, shew thy commandments to me; let me never know the want of the word of God, but, as long as I live, give me to be growing in my acquaintance with it. *I am a stranger*, and therefore stand in need of a guide, a guard, a companion, a comforter; let me have thy commandments always in view, for they will be all this to me, all that a poor stranger can desire. *I am a stranger* here, and must be gone shortly, by thy commandments let me be prepared for my removal hence.

20. *My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times.*

David had prayed that God would open his eyes, *ver. 18.* and open the law, *ver. 19.* now here he pleads the earnestness of his desire towards knowledge and grace, for it is the fervent prayer that avails much.

1. His desire was importunate: *My soul breaketh for the longing it hath to thy judgments*; or, as some read it, *it is taken up, and wholly employed in longing for thy judgments*: the whole stream of its desires runs in this channel. I shall think my self quite broken and undone, if I want the word of God, the conduct, converse, and comfort of it.

2. It was constant; *at all times*; it was not now and then in a good humour, that he was so fond of the word of God, but it is the habitual temper of every sanctified soul, to hunger after the word of God, as its necessary food which there is no living without.

21. *Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments.*

Here is, 1. The wretched character of wicked people. The temper of their minds is bad, they are proud; they magnify themselves above others, and yet that is not all; they magnify themselves against God, and set up their wills in competition with, and opposition to the will of God; as if their hearts and tongues and all were their own. There is something of pride at the bottom of every wilful sin: and the tenor of their laws is no better, they *do err from thy commandments*, as Israel, that did *always err in their hearts*; they err in judgment, and embrace principles contrary to thy commandments, and then no wonder they err in practice, and wilfully turn aside out of the good way. This is the effect of their pride; for they say, *What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?* as Pharaoh, *Who is the Lord?*

2. The wretched case of such. They are certainly cursed, for God *resists the proud*; and they that throw off the commands of the law, lay themselves under its curse, *Gal. iii. 10.* and he that now *beholds them afar off*, will shortly say to them, *Go ye cursed*. The proud sinners bless themselves, God curseth them: and though the most direful effects of this curse are reserved for the other world, yet they are oftentimes severely rebuked in this world; providence crosseth them, vexeth them, and wherein they dealt proudly, God shews himself above them: and these rebukes are earnest of worse. David took notice of the rebukes proud men were under, and it made him cleave the more closely to the word of God, and pray the more earnestly that he might not *err from God's commandments*. Thus saints get good by God's judgments on sinners.

22. *Remove from me reproach and contempt, for I have kept thy testimonies.*

Here, 1. David prays against the reproach and contempt of men; that they might be *removed*, or, as the word is, *rolled from off him*. This intimates that they lay upon him, and neither his

greatness, not his goodness could secure him from being libelled and lampooned: some despised him and endeavoured to make him mean, others reproached him and endeavoured to make him odious. It has often been the lot of those that do well to be ill spoken of. It intimates, that they lay heavy upon him. Hard words indeed, and foul words break no bones, and yet they are very grievous to a tender and ingenuous spirit: therefore David prays, Lord, *remove them from me*, that I may not be thereby either driven from my duty, or discouraged in it. God hath all mens hearts and tongues in his hand, and can silence lying lips, and raise up a good name that is trodden in the dust: to him we may appeal as the assertor of right and avenger of wrong, and may depend on his promise, that he will clear up our *righteousness as the light*, Psal. xxxvii. 6. Reproach and contempt may humble us and do us good, and then it shall be removed.

2. He pleads his constant adherence to the word and way of God: *For I have kept thy testimonies*. He not only pleads his innocency, that he was unjustly censured, but, 1. That he was jeered for well-doing: he was despised and abused for his strictness and zeal in religion; so that it was for God's name's sake that he suffered reproach, and therefore he could with the more assurance beg of God to appear for him. The reproach of God's people, if it be not removed now, it will be turned into the greater honour shortly. 2. That he was not jeered out of well-doing: Lord, remove it from me, *for I have kept thy testimonies* notwithstanding. If in a day of trial we still retain our integrity, we may be sure it will end well.

23. *Princes also did sit, and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.*

See here, 1. How David was abused, even by great men, that should have known better his character and his case, and have been more generous: *Princes did sit*, sit in council, sit in judgment, and *speak against me*. What even princes say is not always right; but it is sad when judgment is thus turned to wormwood; when those that should be the protectors of the innocent are their betrayers. Herein David was a type of Christ, for they were the princes of this world that vilified and *crucified the Lord of glory*, 1 Cor. ii. 8.

2. What method he took to make himself easy under these abuses; he *meditated in God's statutes*, went on in his duty, and did not regard them; as a deaf man he heard not: when they spoke against him, he found that in the Word of God which spoke for him, and spoke comfort to him, and then none of these things moved him. They that have pleasure in communion with God, may easily despise the censures of men, even of princes.

24. *Thy testimonies also are my delight, and my counsellors.*

Here David explains his meditating in God's statutes, *ver. 23.* which was of such use to him when princes sat and spoke against him.

1. Did the affliction make him sad? the Word of God comforted him, and was *his delight*, more his delight than any of the pleasures either of court or camp, of city or country. Sometimes it proves that the comforts of the Word of God are most pleasant to a gracious soul, then when other comforts are embittered.

2. Did it perplex him? was he at a loss what to do when the princes spoke against him? God's statutes were *his counsellors*, and they counselled him to bear it patiently, and commit his cause to God. God's *testimonies* will be the best counsellors, both to princes and private persons; they are *the men of my counsel*, so the word is. There is more safety and satisfaction in consulting them, than in the multitude of other counsellors. Observe here, Those that would have God's testimonies to be their delight, must take them for their counsellors and be advised by them: and let those that take them for their counsellors in close walking, take them for their delight in comfortable walking.

4. DALETH.

25. *My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.*

Here is, 1. David's complaint. We would have thought his soul soaring to heaven; but he saith himself, *My soul* not only rolls in the dust, but *cleaves to the dust*; which is a complaint either, 1. Of his corruptions, his inclination to the world and the body, both which are dust, and that which follows upon it, a deadness to holy duties; when he would *do good evil is present with him*. God spoke Adam not only mortal, but sinful, when he said, *Dust thou art*, Gen. iii. 9. David's complaint here is like St. Paul's, of a body of death he carried about with him. The remainders of indwelling corruption are a very grievous burthen to a gracious soul. Or, 2. Of his afflictions, either trouble of mind, or outward trouble, *Without were fightings, within were fears*, and both together brought him even to the *dust of death*, Psal. xxii. 15. and his soul clave inseparably to it.

2. His petition for relief, and his plea to enforce that petition; *Quicken thou me according to thy word*. By thy providence put life into my affairs, by thy grace put life into my affections; cure me

of my spiritual deadness, and make me lively in my devotion. Note, When we find ourselves dull we must go to God, and beg of him to quicken us; he has an eye to God's *Word* as a means of quickning; for the words which God speaks, *they are spirit, and they are life* to those that receive them; and as an encouragement to hope that God would quicken him, having promised grace and comfort to all the faints, and to David in particular. God's Word must be our guide and plea in every prayer.

26. I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes. 27. Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.

Here is, 1. The great intimacy and freedom that had been between David and his God. David had opened his case, opened his very heart to God; *I have declared my ways*, and acknowledged thee in them all, have taken thee along with me in all my designs and enterprizes. Thus *Jephthah uttered all his words*, and Hezekiah spread his letters before the Lord. *I have declared my ways*, i. e. my wants, and burthens, and troubles I meet with in my way; or, my sins, my by-ways, I have made an ingenuous confession of them, and *thou heardest me*, heardest me patiently all I had to say, and tookedst cognizance of my case. It is an unspeakable comfort to a gracious soul to think with what tenderness all its complaints are received by a gracious God, 1 John v. 14, 15.

2. David's earnest desire of the continuance of that intimacy; not by visions and voices from heaven, but by the Word and Spirit in an ordinary way; *teach me thy statutes*, that is, *make me to understand the way of thy precepts*. When he knew God had heard his declaration of his ways, he doth not say, Now, Lord, tell me my lot, and let me know what the event will be; but now, Lord, tell me my duty, let me know what thou wouldst have me to do as the case stands. Note, Those that in all their ways acknowledge God, may pray in faith, that he will *direct their steps* in the right way. And the surest way of keeping up our communion with God, is, by learning his statutes, and walking intelligently in the *way of his precepts*. See 1 John i. 6, 7.

3. The good use he would make of this, for the honour of God and the edification of others; let me have a good understanding of *the way of thy precepts*, give me a clear, distinct, and methodical knowledge of divine things, *so shall I talk*, with the more assurance, and the more to the purpose, of *thy wondrous works*. We can talk with a better grace of Gods *wondrous works*, the wonders of providence, and especially the wonders of redeeming love, when we understand the way of God's precepts, and walk in that way.

28. My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word. 29. Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously.

Here is, 1. David's remonstrance of his own griefs; *My soul melteth for heaviness*, which is to the same purpose with *ver. 25. My soul cleaveth to the dust*. Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it to melt, to drop away like a candle that wastes. The penitent soul melts in sorrow for sin, and even the patient soul may melt in the sense of affliction, and it is then its interest to pour out its soul before God.

2. His request for God's grace.

1. That God would enable him to bear his affliction well, and graciously support him under it; *Strengthen thou me* with strength in my soul, *according to thy word*, which, as the bread of life, strengthens man's heart to undergo whatever God is pleased to inflict. Strengthen me to do the duties, resist the temptations, and bear up under the burthens of an afflicted state, that the spirit may not fail. *Strengthen me according to that word*, Deut. xxxiii. 25, *As thy days, so shall thy strength be*.

2. That God would keep him from using any unlawful indirect means for the extricating himself out of his troubles, *ver. 29. Remove from me the way of lying*: David was conscious to himself of a proneness to this sin; he had in a strait cheated Ahimelech, 1 Sam. xxi. 2. and Achish, *ver. 13. and chap. xxvii. 10.* Great difficulties are great temptations to palliate a lie with colour of a pious fraud, and a necessary self-defence; therefore David prays, that God would prevent him from falling into this sin any more, lest he should fettle in the way of it. A course of lying, of deceit and dissimulation, is that which every good man dreads, and which we are all concerned to beg of God by his grace to keep us from.

3. That he might always be under the conduct and protection of God's government: *Grant me thy law graciously*; grant me that to keep me from the *way of lying*. David had the law written with his hand; for the king was obliged to transcribe a copy of it for his own use, Deut. xvii. 18. but he prays that he might have it written in his heart, for then, and then only, we have it indeed, and to good purpose. Grant it me more and more. They that know and love the law of God cannot but desire to know it more, and love it better. Grant it me *graciously*; he begs it as a special token of God's favour. Note, We ought to reckon God's law a grant, a gift, an unspeakable gift, to value it, and pray for it, and to give thanks for it accordingly. The divine code of institutes and pre-

cepts is indeed a charter of privileges; and God is truly gracious to those, whom he makes truly gracious by giving them his law.

30. I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me. 31. I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O Lord, put me not to shame. 32. I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.

1. That those who will make any thing to purpose of their religion, must first make it their serious and deliberate choice; so David did, *I have chosen the way of truth*. Note, 1. The way of serious godliness is the *way of truth*; the principles it is founded on are of eternal truth, and it is the only true way to happiness. 2. We must therefore choose to walk in this way, not because we know no other way, but because we know no better; nay, we know no other safe and good way. Let us choose that way for our way which we will walk in, though it be narrow.

2. That those who have chosen *the way of truth*, must have a constant regard to the Word of God as the rule of their walking: *Thy judgments have I laid before me*, as he that learns to write lays his copy before him that he may write according to it: as the workman lays his model and platform before him, that he may do his work exactly. As we must have the Word in our heart by an habitual conformity to it, so we must have it in our eye by an actual regard to it upon all occasions, that we may walk accurately and by rule.

3. That those who make religion their choice and rule are likely to adhere to it faithfully: *I have stuck to thy testimonies* with an unchanged affection, and an unshaken resolution; stuck to them at all times, through all trials: *I have chosen them*, and therefore *I have stuck* to them. Note, The choosing christian is likely to be the sticking christian; when those that are christians by chance tack about, if the wind turn.

4. That those that stick to the Word of God may in faith expect and pray for acceptance with God: for David means that, when he begs, *Lord, put me not to shame*, i. e. never leave me to do that by which I shall shame myself, and do thou not reject my services, which will put me to the greatest confusion.

5. That the more comfort God gives us, the more duty he expects from us, *ver. 32.* Here we have, 1. His resolution to go on vigorously in religion; *I will run the way of thy commandments*. Those that are going to heaven should make haste thither, and be still pressing forward: it concerns us to redeem time and take pains, and to go on in our business with cheerfulness; we then run the way of our duty when we are ready to it, and pleasant in it, and *lay aside every weight*, Heb. xii. 1. 2. His dependence upon God for grace to do so. I shall then abound in thy work *when thou shalt enlarge my heart*. God, by his Spirit, enlargeth the hearts of his people when he gives them wisdom; for that is called *largeness of heart*, 1 Kings iv. 29. When he *sheds abroad the love of God* in the heart, and puts gladness there. The joy of our Lord should be wheels to our obedience.

5. H. E.

33. Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes, and I will keep it unto the end. 34. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law, yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.

Here, 1. David prays earnestly that God himself would be his teacher; he had prophets, and wise men, and priests about him, and was himself well instructed in the law of God, yet he begs to be taught of God, as knowing that *none teacheth like him*, Job xxxvi. 22. Observe here, 1. What he desires to be taught; not the notions or language of God's statutes, but *the way* of them; the way of applying them to myself, and governing myself by them; teach me the way of my duty which thy statutes prescribe, and in every doubtful case let me know what thou wouldst have me to do, let me hear the word behind me, saying, *This is the way walk in it*, Isa. xxx. 21. 2. How he desires to be taught, in such a way as no man could teach him, *Lord, give me understanding*. As the God of nature he has given us intellectual powers and faculties; but here we are taught to pray, that, as the God of grace, he would give us understanding to use those powers and faculties about the great things which belong to our peace, which, through the corruption of nature we are averse to; *Give me understanding*, i. e. an enlightened understanding; for it is as good have no understanding at all as not have it sanctified. Nor will the spirit of revelation in the Word answer the end, unless we have the spirit of wisdom in the heart. This is that which we are indebted to Christ for; for the *Son of God is come, and hath given us understanding*, 1 John v. 20.

2. He promiseth faithfully that he would be a good scholar; if God would teach him he was sure he should learn to good purpose, *I shall keep thy law*; which I shall never do unless I be taught of God, and which, that I may do, is the reason why I desire so earnestly to be taught. If God, by his Spirit, give us a right and good understanding we shall be, 1. Constant in our obedience; I shall

shall keep it to the end, to the end of my life, which will be the surest proof of sincerity. It will not avail the traveller to keep the way for a while, if he do not keep it to the end of his journey.

2. Cordial in our obedience; *I shall observe it with my whole heart*, i. e. with pleasure and delight, and with vigour and resolution. That way that the *whole heart* goes the whole man goes; and that should be the way of God's commandments, for the keeping of them is the whole man.

35. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments, for therein do I delight. 36. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.

He had before prayed to God to enlighten his understanding that he might know his duty and not mistake concerning it: here he prays to God to bow his will, and quicken the active powers of his soul, that he might do his duty; for *it is God that works in us both to will and to do*, as well as to understand what is good, *Phil. ii. 13.* both the good head and the good heart are from the good grace of God, and both are necessary to every good work. Observe here,

1. The grace he prays for, 1. That God would make him able to do his duty; *Make me to go*, strengthen me for every good work. Since we are not sufficient of ourselves, our dependence must be upon the grace of God, for from him all our sufficiency is. God puts his Spirit within us, and so causeth us to *walk in his statutes*, *Ezek. xxxvi. 27.* and this is that which David here begs. 2. That God would make him willing to do it, and would, by his grace, subdue the aversion he naturally had to it; *Incline my heart to thy testimonies*, i. e. to those things which thy testimonies prescribe; not only make me willing to do my duty, as that which I must do, and therefore am concerned to make the best of, but make me desirous to do my duty, as that which is agreeable to the new nature, and really advantageous to me. Duty is then done with delight when the heart is inclined to it: it is God's grace that inclines us, and the more backward we find ourselves to it the more earnest we must be for that grace.

2. The sin he prays against, and that is *covetousness*; *Incline my heart to keep thy testimonies*, and restrain and mortify the inclination there is in me to *covetousness*. That is a sin which stands opposed to all God's testimonies; for the love of money is such a sin as is the root of much sin, of all sin: those therefore that would have the love of God rooted in them, must get the love of the world rooted out of them; for *the friendship of the world is enmity with God*. See in what way God deals with men; not by compulsion, but he draws with the cords of a man, working in them an inclination to that which is good, and an aversion to that which is evil.

3. His plea to enforce this prayer, Lord, bring me to, and keep me in *the way of thy commandments, for therein do I delight*; and therefore I pray thus earnestly for grace to walk in that way. Thou that hast wrought in me this delight in the way of thy commandments; wilt thou not work in me an ability to walk in them, and so crown thine own work?

37. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity: and quicken thou me in thy way.

Here, 1. David prays for restraining grace, that he might be prevented and kept back from that which would hinder him in the way of his duty; *Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity*. The honours, pleasures and profits of the world are the vanities; the aspect and prospect of which draws multitudes away from the paths of religion and godliness; the eye, when fastened on these, infects the heart with the love of them, and so it is alienated from God and divine things; and therefore, as we ought to *make a covenant with our eyes*, and lay a charge upon them, that they shall not wander after, much less fix upon that which is dangerous, *Job xxxi. 1.* so we ought to pray that God by his providence would keep vanity out of our sight, and that by his grace he would keep us from being enamoured with the sight of it.

2. He prays for constraining grace, that he might not only be kept from every thing that would obstruct his progress heavenward, but might have that grace which was necessary to forward him in that progress: *Quicken thou me in thy way*; quicken me to redeem time, to improve opportunity, to press forward, and to do every duty with liveliness and fervency of spirit. Beholding vanity deadens us and slackens our pace: a traveller that stands gazing upon every object that presents itself to his view, will not rid ground; but if our eyes be kept from that which would divert us, our hearts will be kept to that which will excite us.

38. Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear.

Here is, 1. The character of a good man, which is the work of God's grace in him; he is *God's servant*, subject to his law, and employed in his work, that is, *devoted to his fear*, given up to his direction and dispose, and taken up with high thoughts of him, and all those acts of devotion which have a tendency to his glory. Those are truly God's servants that though they have their infirmities and defects, yet are sincerely *devoted to the fear of God*,

and have all their affections and motions governed by that fear: they are engaged and addicted to religion.

2. The confidence that a good man has towards God, in dependence upon the word of his grace to him. They that are God's servants may, in faith and with humble boldness, pray that God would *establiſh his word to them*, i. e. that he would fulfil his promises to them in due time, and in the mean time give them an assurance that they shall be fulfilled. What God has promised we must pray for; we need not be so griping as to ask more; we need not be so modest as to ask less.

39. Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments are good.

Here, 1. David prays against *reproach*, as before, *ver. 22.* David was conscious to himself that he had done that which might give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; which would blemish his own reputation, and turn to the dishonour of his family; now he prays, that God, who has all mens hearts and tongues in his hands, would be pleased to prevent this, to *deliver him from all his transgressions*, that he might not be the reproach of the foolish, which he feared, *Psal. xxxix. 8.* or, he means that reproach which his enemies unjustly loaded him with. Let their lying lips be put to silence.

2. He pleads the goodness of God's judgments; Lord, thou sittest in the throne, and *thy judgments are right and good*, just and kind to those that are wronged, and therefore to thee I appeal from the unjust and unkind censures of men. It is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment, while *he that judgeth us is the Lord*. Or thus, Thy word and ways, and thy holy religion are very good, but the reproaches cast on me will fall on them; therefore, *Lord, turn them away*; let not religion be wounded through my side.

40. Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness.

Here, 1. David professeth the ardent affection he had to the Word of God, *I have longed after thy precepts*; not only loved them, and delighted in what I have already attained, but I have earnestly desired to know them more, and do them better; and am still pressing forward toward perfection. Tastes of the sweetness of God's precepts will but set us a longing after a more intimate acquaintance with them. He appeals to God concerning this passionate desire after his precepts; *Behold, I have thus loved, thus longed*; thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I am thus affected.

2. He prays for grace to enable him to answer this profession. Thou that hast wrought in me this languishing desire, put life into me that I may prosecute it; *quicken me in thy righteousness*, in thy righteous ways, according to thy righteous promise. Where God hath wrought to will he will work to do, and where he hath wrought to desire he will satisfy the desire.

6. V A U.

41. Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD; even thy salvation according to thy word. 42. So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word.

Here is, 1. David's prayer for the salvation of the Lord. Lord, thou art my saviour, I am miserable in myself, and thou only canst make me happy, *Let thy salvation come to me*: hasten temporal salvation to me from my present distresses; and hasten me to the eternal salvation, by giving me the necessary qualifications for it, and the comfortable pledges and foretastes of it.

2. David's dependence upon the grace and promise of God for that salvation. These are the two pillars on which our hope is built, and they will not fail us. 1. The grace of God, *Let thy mercies come, even thy salvation*: our salvation must be attributed purely to God's mercy, and not to any merit of our own. Eternal life must be expected as the *mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ*, *Jude 21.* Lord, I have by faith thy mercies in view, let me by prayer prevail to have them come to me. 2. The promise of God: *Let it come according to thy word*, thy word of promise, *I trust in thy word*, and therefore may expect the performance of the promise. We are not only allowed to trust in God's word, but our trusting in it is the condition of our benefit by it.

3. David's expectation of the good assurance which that grace and promise of God would give him; *So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me* for my confidence in God, as if it would deceive me. When God saves those out of their troubles that trusted in him, he effectually silenceth those who would have shamed that council of the poor, *Psal. xiv. 6.* and their reproaches will be for ever silenced, when the salvation of the fairs is completed; then it will appear, beyond dispute, that it was not in vain to trust in God.

43. And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments. 44. So shall I keep thy law continually, for ever and ever.

Here is, 1. David's humble petition for the tongue of the learned, that he might know how to *speake a word in season* for the glory of God; *Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth.* He means, Lord, let the word of truth be always in my mouth, let me have that wisdom and courage which is necessary to enable me, both to use my knowledge for the instruction of others, and, like the good householder, to bring out of my treasury *things new and old*, and to make profession of my faith whenever I am called to it. We have need to pray to God, that we may never be afraid or ashamed to own his truths and ways, nor deny him before men. David found that he was sometimes at a loss, the *word of truth* was not so ready to him as it should have been, but he prays, Lord, let it not be taken utterly from me; let me always have so much of it at hand as will be necessary to the due discharge of my duty.

2. His humble profession of the heart of the upright, without which the tongue of the learned, however it may be serviceable to others, will stand us in no stead. 1. David professeth his confidence in God. Lord, make me ready and mighty in the scriptures, for I have *hoped in those judgments* of thy mouth, and if they be not at hand, my support and defence are departed from me. 2. He professeth his resolution to adhere to his duty in the strength of God's grace, *so shall I keep thy law continually.* If I have thy word not only in my heart, but in my mouth, I shall do all I should do, stand compleat in thy whole will. Thus shall the *man of God be perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good word and work*, 2 Tim. iii. 17. Col. iii. 16. Observe how he resolves to keep God's law, (1.) *Continually*, without trifling; God must be served in a constant course of obedience every day, and all the day long. (2.) *For ever and ever*, without backsliding; we must never be weary of well doing. If we serve him to the end of our time on earth, we shall be serving him in heaven to the endless ages of eternity; so shall we *keep his law for ever and ever.* Or thus, Lord, let me have the word of truth in *my mouth*, that I may commit that sacred *depositum* to the rising generation, (2 Tim. ii. 22.) and by them it may be transmitted to succeeding ages; so shall thy law be kept *for ever and ever*, i. e. from one generation to another, according to that promise, *Isai. lix. 21. My word in thy mouth shall not depart out of the mouth of thy seed, nor thy seeds seed.*

45. And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts. 46. I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed. 47. And I will delight my self in thy commandments, which I have loved. 48. My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved: and I will meditate in thy statutes.

We may observe in these verses,

1. What David experienced of an affection to the law of God; *I seek thy precepts*, ver. 45. I desire to know and do my duty, and consult thy word accordingly; I do all I can to *understand what the will of the Lord is*, and to discover the intimations of his mind. *I seek thy precepts, for I have loved them*, ver. 47. and again, ver. 48. I not only give consent to them as good, but take complacency in them as good for me. All that love God love his government, and therefore love all his commandments.

2. What he expected from this. Five things he promiseth himself here in the strength of God's grace.

(1.) That he should be free and easy in his duty; *I will walk at liberty*, freed from that which is evil, not hampered with the fetters of my own corruptions, and free to that which is good, doing it not by constraint, but willingly. The service of sin is perfect slavery, the service of God is perfect liberty. Licentiousness is bondage to the greatest of tyrants, conscientiousness is freedom to the meanest of prisoners, *John viii. 32. 36. Luke i. 74, 75.*

(2.) That he should be bold and courageous in his duty; *I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings.* Before David came to the crown, kings were sometimes his judges, as Saul and Achish, but if he were called before them to give a reason of the hope that was in him, he would *speak of God's testimonies*, and profess to build his hope upon them, and make them his council, his guards, his crown, his all. We must never be afraid to own our religion, though it should expose us to the wrath of kings, but speak of it as that which we will live and die by, like the three children before Nebuchadnezzar, *Dan. iii. 16. Acts iv. 20.* After David came to the crown kings were sometimes his companions, they visited him and he returned their visits; but he did not, in complaisance to them, talk of every thing but religion for fear of affronting them, and making his converse uneasy to them: no, God's testimonies shall be the principal subject of his discourse with the kings, not only to shew that he was not ashamed of his religion, but to instruct them in it, and bring them over to it. It is good for kings to hear of *God's testimonies*, and it will adorn the conversation of princes themselves to speak of them.

(3.) That he should be chearful and pleasant in his duty, ver. 47. *I will delight my self in thy commandments*, in conversing with them, in conforming to them; I will never be so well pleased with my self, as when I do that which is pleasing to God. The more delight we take in the service of God, the nearer we come to the perfection we should aim at.

(4.) That he should be diligent and vigorous in his duty. *I will lift up my hands to thy commandments*; which notes not only a vehement desire towards them, *Psal. cxliii. 6.* I will lay hold of them as one afraid of missing them, or letting them go; but a close application of mind to the observance of them; I will lay my hands to the command, not only praise it, but practise it; nay, I will lift up my hands to it, i. e. I will put forth all the strength I have to do it. The hands that hang down, through sloth and discouragement, shall be *lifted up*, Heb. xii. 12.

(5.) That he should be thoughtful and considerate in his duty, ver. 48. *I will meditate in thy statutes*; not only entertain my self with thinking of them, as matters of speculation, but contrive how I may observe them in the best manner. By this it will appear that we truly love God's commandments, if we apply both our minds and our hands to them.

7. Z A I N.

49. Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.

Two things David here pleads with God in prayer for that mercy and grace which he hoped for, according to the word, by which his requests were guided.

1. That God had given him the promise on which he hoped. Lord, I desire no more but that thou wouldst *remember thy word unto thy servant*, and *do as thou hast said*; See 1 *Chron. xvii. 23.* Thou art wise, and therefore wilt perfect what thou hast purposed, and not change thy counsel: Thou art faithful, and therefore wilt perform what thou hast promised, and not break thy word. Those that make God's promises their portion, may with humble boldness make them their plea. Lord, is not that the word which thou hast spoken, and wilt thou not make it good? *Gen. xxxii. 9. Exod. xxxiii. 12.*

2. That God who had given him the promise in the word, had by his grace wrought in him a hope in that promise, and enabled him to depend upon it, and had raised his expectations of great things from it. Hath God kindled in us desires towards spiritual blessings more than towards any temporal good things, and will he not be so kind as to satisfy those desires? Hath he filled us with hopes of those blessings, and will he not be so just as to accomplish these hopes? He that did by his Spirit work faith in us, will according to our faith work for us, and will not disappoint us.

50. This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickned me.

Here is David's experience of benefit by the word:

1. As a means of his sanctification: *Thy word hath quickned me:* It made me alive when I was dead in sin, it has many a time made me lively when I was dead in duty: it has quickned me to that which is good when I was backward and averse to it; and it has quickned me in that which is good, when I was cold and indifferent.

2. Therefore as a means of his consolation, then when he was in affliction, and needed something to support him; because thy word has quickned me at other times, it has comforted me then. The word of God has much in it that speaks *comfort in affliction*, but those only may apply it to themselves who have experienced in some measure the quickning power of the word. If through grace it make us holy, there is enough in it to make us easy, in all conditions, under all events.

51. The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from thy law.

David here tells us, and it will be of use to us to know it,

1. That he had been jeered for his religion. Though he was a man of honour, a man of great prudence, and had done eminent services to his country, yet, because he was a devout conscientious man, *the proud had him greatly in derision*, they ridiculed him, bantered him, and did all they could to expose him to contempt; they laughed at him for his praying, and called it cant; for his seriousness, and called it mopingness; for his strictness, and called it needless preciseness. They were the proud that sat in the scorner's seat, and valued themselves by it.

2. That yet he had not been jeered out of his religion. They have done all they could to make me quit it for shame, but none of these things move me; *I have not declined from thy law* for all this: but, *if this be to be vile*, (as he said when Michal had him greatly in derision) *I will be yet more vile.* He not only had not quite forsaken the law, but had not so much as declined from it. We must never balk any duty, nor let slip an opportunity of doing good, for fear of the reproach of men, or their revilings. The traveller goes on his way, though the dogs bark at him. Those can

can bear but little for Christ, that cannot bear a hard word for him.

52. I remembered thy judgments of old, O LORD; and have comforted my self.

When David was derided for his godliness, he not only held fast his integrity, but,

1. He comforted himself: he not only bore reproach, but bore it cheerfully; it did not disturb his peace, nor break in upon the repose of his spirit in God. It was a comfort to him to think that it was for God's sake that he bore reproach, and that his worst enemies could find *no occasion against him, save only, in the matters of his God*, Dan. vi. 4. They that are derided for their adherence to God's law, may comfort themselves with this, that *the reproach of Christ* will prove, in the end, *greater riches* to them than the *treasures of Egypt*.

2. That which he comforted himself with, was the remembrance of God's judgments of old, i. e. the providences of God concerning his people formerly, both in mercy to them, and in justice against their persecutors. God's judgments of old, in our own early days, and in the days of our fathers, are to be remembered by us for our comfort and encouragement in the way of God, for he is still the same.

53. Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law.

Here is, 1. The character of wicked people; he means those that are openly and grossly wicked; they *forsake thy law*. Every sin is a transgression of the law, but a course and way of wilful and avowed sin, is downright forsaking it, and throwing it off.

2. The impression which the wickedness of the wicked made upon David; it frightened him, it put him into an amazement: he trembled to think of the dishonour thereby done to God, the gratification thereby given to Satan, and the mischiefs thereby done to the souls of men. He dreaded the consequences of it, both to the sinners themselves, and cried out, *O gather not my soul with sinners, let mine enemy be as the wicked*; and to the interests of God's kingdom among men, which he was hereby afraid would be sunk and ruined. He doth not say, *Horror has taken hold on me*, because of their cruel designs against me, but because of the contempt they put on God and his law. Sin is a monstrous horrible thing in the eyes of all that are sanctified, Jer. v. 30. xxiii. 14. Hof. vi. 10. Jer. ii. 12.

54. Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.

Here is, 1. David's state and condition: he was *in the house of his pilgrimage*; which may be understood either as his peculiar trouble, he was often tossed and hurried, and forced to fly; or as his lot, in common with all: this world is *the house of our pilgrimage*, the house in which we are pilgrims; it is our tabernacle, it is our inn; we must confess our selves *strangers and pilgrims upon earth*, that are not at home here, nor must be here long. Even David's palace is but *the house of his pilgrimage*.

2. His comfort in this state: *Thy statutes have been my songs*, with which I here entertained my self as travellers use to divert the thoughts of their weariness, and take off something of the tediousness of their journey, by singing a pleasant song now and then. David was the sweet singer of Israel, and here we are told whence he fetched his songs; they were all borrowed from the word of God; God's statutes were as familiar to him as the songs which a man useth to sing; and he conversed with them in his pilgrimage solitudes. They were as pleasant to him as songs, and *put gladness into his heart*, more than they have that *chant to the sound of the viol*, Amos vi. 5. *Is any afflicted then? let him sing over God's statutes*, and try if he cannot *so sing away sorrow*, Psal. cxxxviii. 5.

55. I have remembered thy name, O LORD, in the night, and have kept thy law. 56. This I had: because I kept thy precepts.

Here is, 1. The converse David had with the word of God: he kept it in mind, and upon every occasion he called it to mind; God's name is the discovery he hath made of himself to us, in and by his word. *This is his memorial unto all generations*, and therefore we should always keep it in memory; remember it *in the night*, upon a waking bed, when we are communing with our own hearts. When others were sleeping, David was remembering God's name, and, by conning that lesson, increasing his acquaintance with it; in the night of affliction this he called to mind.

2. The conscience he made of conforming to it. The due remembrance of God's name, which is prefixed to his law, will have a great influence upon our observance of the law. *I remembered thy name in the night*, and therefore was careful to *keep thy law* all day. How comfortable will it be in the reflection, if our own hearts can witness for us that we have thus remembered God's name, and kept his law!

3. The advantage he got by it, ver. 56. *This I had, because I kept thy precepts*. Some understand this indefinitely; *This I had*, i. e. I had that which satisfied me, I had every thing that is comfortable, *because I kept thy precepts*. Note, All that have made a business of religion will own that it has turned to a good account, and they have been unspeakable gainers by it. Others refer it to what goes immediately before; I had the comfort of keeping thy law, because I kept it. Note, God's work is its own wages: an heart to obey the will of God is a most valuable reward of obedience; and the more we do, the more we may do, and shall do in the service of God; the branch that beareth fruit is made *more fruitful*, John xv. 2.

8. CHETH.

57. Thou art my portion, O LORD, I have said, that I would keep thy words.

We may hence gather the character of a godly man.

1. He makes the favour of God his felicity: *Thou art my portion, O Lord*. Others place their happiness in the wealth and honours of this world; their portion is in this life, they look no further, they desire no more, these are *their good things*, Luke xvi. 25. but all that are sanctified take the Lord for the portion of their inheritance, and their cup, and nothing less will satisfy them. David can appeal to God in this matter; Lord, thou knowest that I have chosen thee for my portion, and depend upon thee to make me happy.

2. He makes the law of God his rule: *I have said, that I would keep thy words*; and what I have said, by thy grace I will do, and will abide by it to the end. Note, Those that take God for their portion, must take him for their prince, and swear allegiance to him: and having promised to *keep his word*, we must often put our selves in mind of our promise, *Psaln xxxix. 1.*

58. I intreated thy favour with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word.

David having in the foregoing verse reflected upon his covenants with God, here reflects upon his prayers to God, and renews his petition. Observe, 1. What he prayed for; having taken God for his portion, he *intreated his favour*, as one that knew he had forfeited it, was unworthy of it, and yet undone without it; but for ever happy if he could obtain it. We cannot demand God's favour as a debt, but must be humble supplicants for it, that God will not only be reconciled to us, but accept us, and smile upon us. He prays, *Be merciful to me*, in the forgiveness of what I have done amiss, and in giving me grace to do better for the future.

2. How he prayed; *with his whole heart*; as one that knew how to value the blessing he prayed for: the gracious soul is entirely set upon the favour of God, and is therefore importunate for it; *I will not let thee go, except thou blest me*.

3. What he pleaded; the promise of God: *Be merciful to me according to thy word*. I desire thy mercy promised, and depend upon the promise for it. They that are governed by the precepts of the word, and are resolved to keep them, (ver. 57.) may plead the promises of the word, and take the comfort of them.

59. I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. 60. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.

David had said he *would keep God's word*, ver. 57. and it was well said; now here he tells us how and in what method he pursued that resolution.

1. He *thought on his ways*; he thought beforehand what he should do, pondering the path of his feet, Prov. iv. 26. that he might walk surely, and not at all adventures; he thought after what he had done, reflected upon his life past, and recollected the paths he had walked in, and the steps he had taken. The word signifies a fixed, abiding thought. Some make it an allusion to those that work embroidery, that are very exact and careful to cover the least flaw: or, to those that cast account; reckon with your selves, what do I owe? what am I worth? *I thought* not on my wealth, as the covetous man, Psal. xlix. 11. but *on my ways*; not what I have, but what I do: because what we do will follow us into another world, when what we have must be left behind. Many are critical enough in their remarks upon other peoples ways, that never think of their own: but *let every man prove his own work*.

2. He *turned his feet to God's testimonies*. He determined to make the word of God his rule, and to walk by that rule. He turned from the by-paths to which he had turned aside, and returned to God's testimonies: he turned not only his eye to them, but his feet; his affections to the love of God's word, and his conversation to the practice of it. The bent and inclinations of his soul was towards God's testimonies, and his conversation was governed by them. Penitent reflections must produce pious resolutions.

3. He did this presently, and without demur, ver. 60. *I made haste, and delayed not*. When we are under convictions of sin, we must strike while the iron is hot, and not think to defer the profe-

prosecution of them, as Felix did, to a more convenient season : when we are called to duty we must lose no time, but set about it to day, while it is called to day.

Now this account David here gives of himself may refer either to his constant practice every day, he reflected on his ways at night, directed his feet to God's testimonies in the morning, and what his hand found to do that was good he did it without delay ; or it may refer to his first acquaintance with God and religion, when he began to throw off the vanity of childhood and youth, and to remember his Creator ; that blessed change was by the grace of God thus wrought. Note, 1. Conversion begins in serious consideration, *Ezek. xviii. 28. Luke xv. 17.* 2. Consideration must end in a sound conversion. To what purpose have we thought on our ways, if we do not turn our feet with all speed to God's testimonies ?

61. The bands of the wicked have robbed me : but I have not forgotten thy law.

Here is, 1. The malice of David's enemies against him : they were wicked men, who hated him for his godliness ; there were bands or troops of them confederate against him ; they did him all the mischief they could, they robbed him ; having endeavoured to take away his good name, *ver. 51.* they set upon his goods, and spoiled him of them, either by plunder in time of war, or by fines and confiscations under colour of law. Saul (it is likely) seized his effects ; Absalom his palace ; the Amalekites rifled Ziklag. Worldly wealth is what we may be robbed of : David, though a man of war, could not keep his own : *Thieves break through and steal.*

2. The testimony of David's conscience for him, that he had held fast his religion when he was stripped of every thing else, as Job did, when the bands of the Caldeans and Sabeans had robbed him. *But I have not forgotten thy law.* No care or grief should drive God's word out of our minds, or hinder our comfortable relish of it, and converse with it. Nor must we ever think the worse of the ways of God for any trouble we meet with in those ways, nor fear being losers by our religion at last, however we may be losers for it now.

62. At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee : because of thy righteous judgments.

Though David is in this psalm much in prayer, yet he did not neglect the duty of thanksgiving ; for those that pray much will have much to give thanks for. See, 1. How much God's hand was eyed in his thanksgivings : he doth not say, *I will give thanks,* because of thy favours to me, which I have the comfort of, but *because of thy righteous judgments ;* all the disposals of thy providence in wisdom and equity, which thou hast the glory of. We must give thanks for the asserting of God's honour, and the accomplishing of his word in all he doth in the government of the world.

2. How much David's heart was set upon his thanksgivings : he would rise at midnight to give thanks to God. Great and good thoughts kept him awake, and refreshed him, instead of sleep ; and so zealous was he for the honour of God, that when others were in their beds, he was upon his knees at his devotions. He did not affect to be seen of men in it, but gave thanks in secret, where our heavenly Father sees. He had praised God in the courts of the Lord's house, and yet he will do it in his bed-chamber. Publick worship will not excuse us from secret worship. When David found his heart affected with God's judgments, he immediately offered up those affections to God, in actual adorations, not deferring lest they should cool. Yet observe his reverence, he did not lie still and give thanks, but rose out of his bed, perhaps, in the cold and in the dark, to do it the more solemnly. And see what a good husband he was of time, when he could not lie and sleep, he would rise and pray.

63. I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.

David had often expressed the great love he had to God, here he speaks the great love he had to the people of God ; and observe,

1. Why he loved them ; not so much because they were his best friends, most firm to his interest, and most forward to serve him, but because they were such as feared God, and kept his precepts, and so did him honour, and helped to support his kingdom among men. Our love to the saints is then sincere, when we love them for the sake of what we see of God in them, and the service they do to him.

2. How he shewed his love to them. He was a companion of them. He had not only a spiritual communion with them in the same faith and hope, but he joined with them in holy ordinances, in the courts of the Lord, where rich and poor, prince and peasant, meet together ; he sympathized with them in their joys and sorrows, *Heb. x. 33.* he conversed familiarly with them, communicated his experiences to them, and consulted theirs : He not only took such to be his companions as did fear God, but he vouchsafed himself to be a companion with all, with any that did so, wherever he met with them. Though he was a king, he would

associate with the poorest of his subjects that feared God, *Psal. xv. 14. Jam. ii. 1.*

64. The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy : teach me thy statutes.

Here, 1. David pleads that God is good to all the creatures, according to their necessities and capacities ; as the heaven is full of God's glory, so the earth is full of his mercy, full of the instances of his pity and bounty. Not only the land of Canaan, where God is known and worshipped, but the whole earth, in many parts of which he has no homage paid him, is full of his mercy : not only the children of men upon the earth, but even the inferior creatures taste of God's goodness ; *his tender mercies are over all his works.*

2. He therefore prays that God would be good to him according to his necessity and capacity : *Teach me thy statutes.* Thou feedest the young ravens that cry with food proper for them, and wilt thou not feed me with spiritual food, the bread of life, which my soul needs and craves, and cannot subsist without ? *The earth is full of thy mercy ;* and is not heaven too ? Wilt thou not then give me spiritual blessings in heavenly places ? A gracious heart will fetch an argument from any thing to enforce a petition for divine teaching. Sure he that will not let his birds be unfed, will not let his children be untaught.

9. T E T H.

65. Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word. 66. Teach me good judgment and knowledge : for I have believed thy commandments.

Here, 1. David makes a thankful acknowledgment of God's gracious dealings with him all along. *Thou hast dealt well with thy servant.* However God hath dealt with us, we must own he hath dealt well with us, better than we deserve ; and all in love, and with design to work for our good. In many instances God has done well for us beyond our expectations ; he hath done well for all his servants, never any of them complained that he had used them hardly. *Thou hast dealt well with me,* not only according to thy mercy, but according to thy word. God's favours look best when they are compared with the promise, are seen flowing from that fountain.

2. Upon these experiences he grounds a petition for divine instruction. *Teach me good judgment and knowledge,* that, by thy grace, I may render again, in some measure, according to the benefit done unto me. Teach me a good taste, so the word signifies, a good relish, to discern things that differ, to distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil ; for *the ear tries words, as the mouth tastes meat.* We should pray to God for a sound mind, that we may have *spiritual senses exercised,* *Heb. v. 14.* Many have knowledge that have little judgment ; they that have both, are well fortified against the snares of Satan, and well furnished for the service of God, and their generation.

3. This petition is backed with a plea ; *for I have believed thy commandments ;* received them, and consented to them that they are good, and submitted to their government ; therefore, Lord, *teach me.* Where God hath given a good heart, a good head too may in faith be prayed for.

67. Before I was afflicted, I went astray : but now have I kept thy word.

David here tells us what he had experienced,

1. Of the temptations of a prosperous condition : *Before I was afflicted,* while I lived in peace and plenty, and knew no sorrow, *I went astray* from God and my duty : sin is going astray, and then we are most apt to wander from God, when we are easy and think our selves at home in the world. Prosperity is the unhappy occasion of much iniquity : it makes people conceited of themselves, indulgent of the flesh, forgetful of God, in love with the world, and deaf to the reproofs of the word. See *Psal. xxx. 6.* It is good for us when we are afflicted, to remember how, and wherein we went astray *before we were afflicted,* that we may answer the end of the affliction.

2. Of the benefit of an afflicted state ; *Now I have kept thy word,* and so have been recovered from my wanderings. God often makes use of afflictions as a means to reduce those to himself that have wandered from him. Sanctified afflictions humble us for sin, and shew us the vanity of the world ; they soften the heart, and open the ear to discipline. The prodigal's distress brought him to himself first, and then to his father.

68. Thou art good, and doest good ; teach me thy statutes.

Here, 1. David praiseth God's goodness, and gives him the glory of it : *Thou art good, and doest good.* All that have any knowledge of God, and dealings with him, will own that he doth good, and therefore will conclude that he is good. The streams of

of God's goodness are so numerous, and run so full, so strong to all the creatures, that we must conclude, the fountain that is in himself to be inexhaustible. We cannot conceive how much good our God doth every day, much less can we conceive how good he is. Let us acknowledge it with admiration, and with holy love and thankfulness.

2. He prays for God's grace, and begs to be under the conduct and influence of it: *Teach me thy statutes.* Lord, thou dost good to all, art the bountiful benefactor of all the creatures; this is the good I beg thou wilt do to me, instruct me in my duty, and incline me to it, and enable me to do it. *Thou art good, and dost good; Lord, teach me thy statutes,* that I may be good, and do good, may have a good heart, and live a good life. It is an encouragement to poor sinners to hope that God will *teach them his way*, because he is *good and upright*, Psalm xxv. 8.

69. The proud have forged a lie against me: but I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart. 70. Their heart is as fat as grease, but I delight in thy law.

David here tells us how he was affected as to the proud and wicked people that were about him.

1. He did not fear their malice, nor was he by it deterred from his duty; they *have forged a lie against me*: thus they aimed to take away his good name: nay, all we have in the world, even life itself, may be brought into danger by those who make no conscience of forging a lie. They that were proud envied David's reputation because it eclipsed them, and therefore did all they could to blemish him; and took a pride in trampling upon him: they therefore persuaded themselves it was no sin to tell a deliberate lie, if it might but expose him to contempt. Their wicked wit forged lies, invented stories, which there was not the least colour for, to serve their wicked designs. And what did David do when he was thus belied? He will bear it patiently; he will keep that precept which forbids him to render railing for railing, and will with all his heart sit down silent. He will go on in his duty with constancy and resolution; let them say what they will, *I will keep thy precepts*, and not dread their reproach.

2. He did not envy their prosperity, nor was he by it allured from his duty: *Their heart is as fat as grease.* The proud are at ease, Psalm cxxii. 4. they are full of the world, and the wealth and pleasures of it; and this makes them, 1. Senseless and secure, and stupid; they are past feeling: thus the phrase is used, *Isa. vi. 10. Make the heart of this people fat.* They are not sensible of the touching of the word of God, or his rod. 2. Sensual and voluptuous: *Their eyes stand out with fatness*, Psalm lxxiii. 7. they roll themselves in the pleasures of sense, and take up with them as their chief good; and much good may it do them, I would not change conditions with them; *I delight in thy law*; I build my security upon the promises of God's word, and have pleasure enough in communion with God, infinitely preferable to all their delights. The children of God that are acquainted with spiritual pleasures, need not envy the children of this world their carnal pleasures.

71. It is good for me that I have been afflicted: that I might learn thy statutes.

See here, 1. That it hath been the lot of the best saints to be afflicted. The proud and the wicked lived in pomp and pleasure, while David, though he kept close to God and his duty, was still in affliction: *Waters of a full cup are wrung out to God's people*, Psalm lxxiii. 10.

2. That it hath been the advantage of God's people to be afflicted. David could speak experimentally, *It was good for me*; many a good lesson he had learnt by his afflictions, and many a good duty he had been brought to, which otherwise had been unlearned and undone. Therefore God visited him with affliction that he might learn God's statutes; and the intention was answered, the afflictions had contributed to the improvement of his knowledge and grace. He that chastened him, taught him. *The rod and reproof give wisdom.*

72. The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.

This is a reason why David reckoned that when by his afflictions he learned God's statutes, and the profit did so much balance the loss, that he was really a gainer by them; for God's law, which he got acquaintance with by his affliction, was better to him than all the gold and silver which he lost by his affliction.

1. David had but a little of the word of God in comparison with what we have, yet see how highly he valued it; how inexcusable then are we, who have both the Old and New Testament compleat, and yet account them as a strange thing! Observe, therefore, he valued the law, because it is *the law of God's mouth*, the revelation of his will, and ratified by his authority.

2. He had a great deal of gold and silver in comparison with what we have, yet see how little he values it: his riches increased, and yet he did not set his heart upon them, but upon the word of

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God. That was better to him, yielded him better pleasures, and better maintenance, and a better inheritance, than all the treasures he was master of. Those that have read and believe David's *Psalms*, and Solomon's *Ecclesiastes*, cannot but prefer the word of God far before the wealth of this world.

10. J O D.

73. Thy hands have made me, and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.

Here, 1. David adores God as the God of nature, and the author of his being: *Thy hands have made me, and fashioned me*, Job x. 8. Every man is as truly the work of God's hands, as the first man was, *Psalm cxxxix. 15, 16. Thy hands have not only made me, and given me a being, otherwise I had never been, but fashioned me, and given me this being, this noble and excellent being, endued with these powers and faculties; and we must own we are fearfully and wonderfully made.*

2. He addresseth himself to God as the God of grace, and begs he will be the author of his new and better being: God made us to serve him and enjoy him; but by sin we have made our selves unable for his service, and indisposed for the enjoyment of him; and we must have a new and divine nature, otherwise we had the human nature in vain; therefore David prays, Lord, since thou hast made me by thy power for thy glory, make me anew by thy grace, that I may answer the ends of my creation, and live to some purpose. *Give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.* The way in which God recovers and secures his interest in men, is by giving them an understanding; for by that door he enters into the soul, and gains possession of it.

74. They that fear thee, will be glad when they see me: because I have hoped in thy word.

Here is, 1. The confidence of this good man in the hope of God's salvation: *I have hoped in thy word*; and I have not found it in vain to do so; it has not failed me, nor have I been disappointed in my expectations from it. It is a hope that *maketh not ashamed*; but is present satisfaction, and fruition at last.

2. The concurrence of other good men with him in the joy of that salvation: *They that fear thee, will be glad when they see me* received by my hope in thy word, and delivered according to my hope. The comforts which some of God's children have in God, and the favours they have received from him, should be matter of joy to others of them. St. Paul often hopes that for God's grace to him thanks would be rendered by many, *2 Cor. i. 11. iv. 15.* Or, it may be taken more generally; good people are glad to see one another: they are especially pleased with those, and, as I may say, proud of them who are eminent for their hope in God's word.

75. I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

Still David is in affliction, and being so, he owns, 1. That his sin was justly corrected: *I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right*, are righteousness it self. However God is pleased to afflict us, he doth us no wrong, nor can we charge him with any iniquity, but must acknowledge that it is less than we have deserved. We know that God is holy in his nature, and wise and just in all the acts of his government, and therefore we cannot but know, in the general, that his *judgments are right*, though, in some particular instances, there may be difficulties which we cannot easily resolve.

2. That God's promise was graciously performed. The former may silence us under our afflictions, and forbid us to repine, but this may satisfy us, and enable us to rejoice; for afflictions are in the covenant, and therefore they are not only not meant for our hurt, but they are really intended for our good: *In faithfulness thou hast afflicted me*, pursuant to the great design of my salvation. It is easier to own in general that God's *judgments are right*, than to own it when it comes to be our own case; but David subscribes to it with approbation, even my afflictions are just and kind.

76. Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.

77. Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight.

Here is, 1. An earnest petition to God for his favour. They that own the justice of God in their afflictions, as David had done, ver. 75. may, in faith, and with humble boldness, be earnest for the mercy of God, and the tokens and fruits of that mercy, in their affliction: He prays for God's *merciful kindness*, ver. 76. his *tender mercies*, ver. 77. he can claim nothing as his due, but all his supports under his affliction must come from mere mercy and compassion to one in misery, one in want. Let these *come to me*, i. e. the evidence of them; clear it up to me, that thou hast

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a kind-

a kindness for me, and mercy in store; and the effects of them; let them work my relief and deliverance.

2. The benefit he promised himself from God's loving kindness: *Let it come to me for my comfort*, ver. 76. that will comfort me when nothing else will; that will comfort me whatever grieves me. Gracious souls fetch all their comfort from a gracious God, as the fountain of all happiness and joy. *Let it come to me that I may live*, i. e. that I may be revived, and my life may be made sweet to me, for I have no joy of it while I am under God's displeasure. *In his favour is life*, in his frowns are death. A good man cannot live with any satisfaction any longer, than he has some tokens of God's favour to him.

3. His pleas for the benefits of God's favour. He pleads, 1. God's promise. Let me have thy kindness *according to thy word unto thy servant*: the kindness which thou hast promised, and because thou hast promised it. Our Master has passed his word to all his servants that he will be kind to them, and they may plead it with him. 2. His own confidence and complacency in that promise. *Thy law is my delight*, i. e. I hope in thy word, and rejoice in that hope. Note, Those that delight in the law of God, may depend upon the favour of God, for it shall certainly make them happy.

78. Let the proud be ashamed, for they dealt perversely with me, without a cause; but I will meditate in thy precepts. 79. Let those that fear thee, turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies.

Here David shews,

1. How little he valued the ill will of sinners. There were those that dealt perversely with him, that were peevish and ill-conditioned towards him, that sought advantages against him, and misconstrued all he said and did: Even those that deal most fairly, yet may meet with those that deal perversely. But David mattered it not, for, 1. He knew it was *without cause*, and that for his love they were his adversaries. The causeless reproach, like the curse causeless, may be easily slighted; it doth not hurt us, and therefore should not move us. 2. He could pray in faith that they might be *ashamed* of it; God's dealing favourably with him, might make them ashamed to think that they had dealt perversely with him. *Let them be ashamed*, i. e. let them be brought either to repentance or to ruin. 3. He could go on in the way of his duty, and find comfort in that. However they deal with me, *I will meditate in thy precepts*, and entertain my self with them.

2. How much he valued the good will of saints, and how desirous to stand right in their opinion, and keep up his interest in them, and communion with them. *Let those that fear thee, turn to me*: he doth not mean so much that they might side with him, and take up arms in his cause, as that they might love him, and pray for him, and associate with him. Good men desire the friendship and society of those that are good. Some think it intimates that when David had been guilty of that foul sin in the murder of Uriah, though he was a king, they that feared God grew strange to him, and turned from him, for they were ashamed of him: this troubled him, and therefore he prays, Lord, let them *turn to me* again. He desires especially the company of those that were not only honest, but intelligent, *that have known thy testimonies*, have good heads as well as good hearts, and whose conversation will be edifying. It is desirable to have an intimacy with such.

80. Let my heart be found in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed.

Here is, 1. David's prayer for sincerity, that his heart might be brought to God's statutes, and that it might be found in them, not rotten and deceitful; that he might not rest in the form of godliness, but be acquainted with, and subject to the power of it; that he might be hearty and constant in religion, and that his soul might be in health.

2. His dread of the consequences of hypocrisy; *that I be not ashamed*. Shame is the portion of hypocrites, either here if it be repented of, or hereafter if it be not. *Let my heart be found*, that I fall not into scandalous sin, that I fall not quite off from the ways of God, and so shame my self: *Let my heart be found*, that I may come *boldly to the throne of grace*, and may lift up my face without spot at the great day.

II. CAPH.

81. My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word. 82. Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?

Here we have the psalmist,

1. Longing for help from heaven; *My soul fainteth, mine eyes fail*. He longs for the salvation of the Lord, and for his word, i. e. salvation according to the word: he is not thus eager for the creatures of fancy, but the objects of faith; salvation from the present calamities under which he was groaning, and the doubts and

fears which he was oppressed with. It may be understood of the coming of the Messiah, and so he speaks in the name of the Old Testament church; the souls of the faithful even *fainted to see* that salvation of which the prophets testified, 1 Pet. i. 12. their eyes failed for it. Abraham saw it at a distance, and so did others, but at such a distance, that it put their eyes to the stretch, and they could not steadfastly see it. David was now under prevailing dejections, and, having been long so, his eyes cried out, *When wilt thou comfort me?* Comfort me with *thy salvation*, comfort me with *thy word*. Observe, 1. The salvation and consolation of God's people are secured to them by the word, which will certainly be fulfilled in its season. 2. The promised salvation and comfort may be, and often are long deferred, so that they are ready to faint and fall in the expectation of them. 3. Though we think the time long ere the promised salvation and comfort come, yet we must still keep our eye upon it, and resolve to take up with nothing short of it: Thy salvation, thy word, thy comfort, are what my heart is still upon.

2. Waiting for that help, assured that it will come; and tarrying till it doth come. *But I hope in thy word*, and but for hope the heart would break. When the eyes fail, yet the faith must not; for the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and shall not lie.

83. For I am become like a bottle in the smoke: yet do I not forget thy statutes.

David begs God would make haste to comfort him:

1. Because his affliction was great, and therefore he was an object of God's pity. Lord, make haste to help me, *for I am become like a bottle in the smoke*, a leathern bottle, which, if it hung any while in the smoke, was not only blackened with soot, but dried, and parched, and shrivelled up: David was thus wasted by age, and sickness, and sorrow. See how affliction will mortify the strongest and stoutest of men! David had been of a ruddy countenance, as fresh as a rose; but now he is withered, his colour is gone, his cheeks are furrowed: thus doth man's beauty consume under God's rebukes, as a moth fretting a garment. A bottle, when it is thus wrinkled with the smoke, is thrown by, and no more use of it: Who will put wine into such old bottles? Thus was David in his low estate looked upon as a despised, broken vessel, and as a vessel in which there was no pleasure. Good men, when they are drooping and melancholy, sometimes think themselves more slighted than really they are.

2. Because though his affliction was great, yet it had not driven him from his duty, and therefore he was within the reach of God's promise; *yet do I not forget thy statutes*. Whatever our outward condition is, we must not cool in our affection to the word of God, nor let that slip out of our minds; no care, no grief, must crowd that out. As some *drink and forget the law*, Prov. xxxi. 5. so others weep and forget the law; but we must, in every condition, both prosperous and adverse, have the things of God in remembrance: and if we be mindful of God's statutes, we may pray and hope, that he will be mindful of our sorrows, though for a time he seems to forget us.

84. How many are the days of thy servant? when wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?

Here, 1. David prays against the instruments of his troubles, that God would make haste to execute judgment on those that persecuted him. He prays not for power to avenge himself, he bore no malice to any, but that God would take to himself the vengeance that belonged to him, and *would repay*, Rom. xii. 19. as the God that *sits in the throne judging right*. There is a day coming, and a great and terrible day it will be, when God will execute judgment on all the proud persecutors of his people; *Tribulation to them that troubled them*; Enoch foretold it, Jude 14. whose prophecy, perhaps, David here had an eye to: and that day we are to look for, and pray for the hastening of; *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly*.

2. He pleads the long continuance of his trouble: *How many are the days of thy servant?* *The days of my life are but few*, so some; therefore let them not all be miserable; and therefore make haste to appear for me against my enemies, *before I go hence, and shall be seen no more*. Or rather, *the days of my affliction are many*, thou seest, Lord, how many they be, when wilt thou return in mercy to me? Sometimes, for the elects sake, *the days of trouble are shortened*; O let the days of my trouble be shortened; I am *thy servant*: and therefore, as the eyes of a servant are to the hand of his master, so are mine to thee, until that thou have mercy on me.

85. The proud have digged pits for me, which are not after thy law. 86. All thy commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully; help thou me. 87. They had almost consumed me upon earth: but I forsook not thy precepts.

David's state was herein a type and figure of the state both of Christ and christians, that he was grievously persecuted: as there are

are many of his psalms, so there are many of the verses of this psalm which complain of this, as those here. Where observe,

1. The account he gives of his persecutors, and their malice against him. (1.) They were *proud*, and in their pride they persecuted him, glorying in this, that they could trample upon one who was so much cried up, and hoping to raise themselves on his ruins. (2.) They were unjust, they persecuted him *wrongfully*; so far was he from giving them any provocation, that he had studied to oblige them; but for his love they were his adversaries. (3.) They were spiteful, they digged pits for him; which speaks them deliberate in their designs against him, and that what they did was of malice prepense: it intimates likewise, that they were subtil and crafty, and had the serpent's head as well as the serpent's venom; and that they were industrious, and would stick at no pains to do him a mischief; and treacherous, laying snares in secret for him, as hunters do to take wild beasts, *Psal. xxxv. 7.* Such has been the enmity of the serpent's seed to the seed of the woman. (4.) They here in shewed their enmity to God himself: the pits they digged for him were not after God's law; he means, they were very much against his law, which forbids to *devise evil to our neighbour*, and hath particularly said, *Touch not mine anointed.* The law appointed, that if a man digged a pit which occasioned any mischief, he should answer for the mischief, *Exod. xxi. 33, 34.* much more, when it was digged with a mischievous design. (5.) They carried on their designs against him so far, that they had almost consumed him upon earth; they went near to ruin him and all his interests. It is possible, that those which shall shortly be consummate in heaven, may be for the present almost consumed on earth; and it is of the Lord's mercies (and, considering the malice of their enemies, it is a miracle of mercy) that they are not quite consumed: But the bush in which God is, though it burns, shall not be burnt up.

2. His application to God in his persecuted state. (1.) He acknowledgeth the truth and goodness of his religion, though he suffered; however it be, *all thy commandments are faithful*, and therefore whatever I lose for my observance of them, I know I shall not lose by it. True religion, if it be worth any thing, is worth every thing, and therefore worth suffering for. Men are false, I find them so; men of low degree, men of high degree are so, there is no trusting them; but *all thy commandments are faithful*, on them I may rely. (2.) He begs that God would stand by him, and succour him; *They persecute me, help thou me*: help me under my troubles, that I may bear them patiently, and as becomes me, and may still hold fast my integrity, and in due time help me out of my troubles. *God help me*, is an excellent comprehensive prayer, it is pity it should ever be used lightly, and as a by-word.

3. His adherence to his duty, notwithstanding all the malice of his persecutors, *ver. 87.* But I forsook not thy precepts. That which they aimed at was to frighten him from the ways of God, but they could not prevail; he would sooner forsake all that was dear to him in this world, than forsake the word of God; would sooner lose his life, than lose the comfort of doing his duty.

88. Quicken me after thy loving kindness, so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.

Here is, 1. David in care to be found in the way of his duty; his constant desire and design is to keep the testimony of God's mouth, to keep to it as his rule, and to keep hold of it as his confidence and portion for ever. These we must keep, whatever we lose.

2. David at prayer for divine grace to assist him therein: *Quicken me after thy loving kindness*; make me alive, and make me lively, so shall I keep thy testimonies; implying, that otherwise I shall not keep them: we cannot proceed nor persevere in the good way, unless God quicken us, and put life into us; we are therefore here taught to depend upon the grace of God, for strength to do every good work, and to depend upon it as grace, as purely the fruit of God's favour. He had prayed before, *Quicken me in thy righteousness*, *ver. 40.* but here, *Quicken me after thy loving kindness.* The surest token of God's good-will towards us, is his good work in us.

12. L A M E D.

89. For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. 90. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. 91. They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants.

Here, 1. The psalmist acknowledgeth the unchangeableness of the word of God, and of all his counsels. *For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled.* Thou art for ever thyself, so some read it; thou art the same, and with thee there is no variableness, and this is a proof of it: Thy word, by which the heavens were made, is settled there in the abiding products of it; or the settling of God's word in heaven, is opposed to the changes and revolutions that are here upon earth: *All flesh is grass*; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. It is settled in heaven, i. e. in the secret counsel of God, which is hid in himself, and is far above out of our sight, and is immovable, as mountains of brass. And his revealed will is as firm as his secret will; as he will fulfil the thoughts of his heart,

so no word of his shall fall to the ground; for it follows here, *thy faithfulness is unto all generations*, i. e. the promise is sure to every age of the church, and it cannot be antiquated by tract of time. The promises that look never so far forward shall be performed in their season.

2. He produceth for proof of it the constancy of the course of nature: *Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth*; it is what it was at first made, and where it was at first placed, poised with its own weight, and notwithstanding the convulsions in its own bowels, the tosses of the sea that is interwoven with it, and the violent concussions of the atmosphere that surrounds it, remains unmoved. *They*, i. e. the heaven and the earth, and all the hosts of both, *continue to this day according to thine ordinances*; they remain in the posts wherein thou hast set them, they fill up the place assigned them, and answer the purposes for which they were intended. The stability of the ordinances of day and night, of heaven and earth, is produced to prove the perpetuity of God's covenant, *Jer. xxxi. 35, 36.* xxxiii. 20, 21. It is by virtue of God's promise to Noah, *Gen. viii. 22.* that day and night, summer and winter observe a steady course: They have continued to this day, and shall still continue to the end of time, acting according to the ordinances which were at first given them; for all are thy servants, they do thy will, and set forth thy glory, and in both are thy servants. All the creatures are in their places, and, according to their capacities, serviceable to their Creator, and answer the ends of their creation; and shall man be the only rebel, the only revolter from his allegiance, and the only unprofitable burthen of the earth?

92. Unless thy law had been my delight, I should then have perished in mine affliction.

Here is, 1. The great distress that David was in; he was in affliction, and ready to perish in his affliction; not likely to die, so much as likely to despair; he was ready to give up all for gone, and to look upon himself as cut off from God's sight; he therefore admires the goodness of God to him that he had not perished; that he kept the possession of his own soul and was not driven out of his wits by his troubles; but especially that he was enabled to keep close to his God, and was not driven off from his religion by them. Though we are not kept from affliction, yet if we are kept from perishing in our affliction, we have no reason to say, we have cleansed our hands in vain, or, what profit is it that we have served God?

2. His support in this distress; God's law was his delight, 1. It had been so formerly, and the remembrance of that was a comfort to him, as it afforded a good evidence of his integrity. 2. It was so now in his affliction; it afforded him abundant matter of comfort, and from these fountains of life he drew living waters, when the cisterns of the creature were broken or dried up. His converse with God's law, and his meditations on it, were his delightful entertainment in solitude and sorrow. A Bible is a pleasant companion at any time, if we please.

93. I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.

Here is, 1. A very good resolution, *I will never forget thy precepts*, but will always retain a remembrance of, and regard to thy word as my rule. It is a resolution for perpetuity, never to be altered. Note, The best evidence of our love to the word of God is never to forget it. We must resolve, that we will never at any time cast off our religion, and never, upon no occasion, lay aside our religion, but that we will be constant to it, and persevere in it.

2. A very good reason for it: *For by them thou hast quickened me*; not only they are quickning, but, 1. They have been so to me, I have found them so: those speak best of the things of God that speak by experience, who can say, that by the word the spiritual life has been begun in them, maintained and strengthened in them, excited and comforted in them. 2. Thou hast made them so: the word of it self, without the grace of God, would not quicken us; ministers can but prophesy upon the dry bones, they cannot put life into them; but ordinarily the glory of God works by the word, and makes use of it as a means of quickning: and this is a good reason why we should never forget it, but should highly value what God hath put such honour upon, and dearly love what we have found such benefit by, and hope still to find. See here what is the best help for bad memories, namely, *good affections*: if we are quickened by the word, we shall never forget it; nay, that word that doth really quicken us to and in our duty, is not forgotten; though the expressions be lost, if the impressions remain it is well enough.

94. I am thine, save me: for I have sought thy precepts.

Here, 1. David claims relation to God: *I am thine*, devoted to thee, and owned by thee, thine in covenant. He doth not say, *thou art mine*, (as Dr. Manton observes) though that follows of course, because that were a higher challenge, but *I am thine*, expressing himself in a more humble and dutiful way of resignation;

nor doth he say, *I am thus*, but, *I am thine*, not pleading his own good property or qualification, but God's propriety in him; *I am thine*, not my own, not the world's.

2. He proves his claim: *I have sought thy precepts*, i. e. I have carefully enquired concerning my duty, and diligently endeavoured to do it. This will be the best evidence that we belong to God; all that are his, though they have not found perfection are seeking it.

3. He improves his claim: *I am thine, save me*, save me from sin, save me from ruin. Those that have in sincerity given up themselves to God to be his, may be sure that he will protect them, and preserve them to his heavenly kingdom, *Mal. iii. 18.*

95. The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: but I will consider thy testimonies.

Here, 1. David complains of the malice of his enemies: *The wicked* (and none but such would be enemies to so good a man) *have waited for me to destroy me*; they were very cruel, and aimed at no less than his destruction; they were very crafty, and sought all opportunities to do him a mischief; and they were confident, they expected, (so some read it) that they should destroy him, they thought themselves sure of their prey.

2. He comforts himself in the word of God, as his protection. While they are contriving my destruction, *I consider thy testimonies*, which secure to me my salvation. God's testimonies are then likely to be our support when we consider them, and dwell in our thoughts upon them.

96. I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad.

Here we have David's testimony from his own experience:

1. Of the vanity of the world and its insufficiency to make us happy; *I have seen an end of all perfection*: poor perfection which one sees an end of! yet such are all those things in this world which pass for perfections. David in his time had seen Goliath the strongest overcome, Asahel the swiftest overtaken, Ahithophel the wisest befooled, Absalom the fairest deformed, and, in short, he had seen an end of perfection, of all perfection; he saw it by faith, he saw it by observation, he saw an end of the perfection of the creature both in respect of sufficiency it was scanty and defective (there is that to be done for us which the creature cannot do) and in respect of continuance it will not last our time, for it will not last to eternity as we must. The glory of man is but as the flower of the grass.

2. Of the fulness of the word of God, and its sufficiency for our satisfaction: *But thy commandment is broad, exceeding broad*. The word of God reaches to all cases, to all times: the divine law lays a restraint upon the whole man, is designed to sanctify us wholly. There is a great deal required and forbidden in every commandment. The divine promise (for that also is commanded) extends itself to all our burthens, wants, and grievances, and hath that in it which will make a portion and happiness for us when we have seen an end of all perfection.

13. M E M.

97. O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.

Here is, 1. David's inexpressible love to the word of God: *O how love I thy law!* He protests his affection to the word of God with a holy vehemency; he found that love to it in his heart which, considering the corruption of his nature and the temptation of the world, he could not but wonder at, and at that grace which had wrought it in him. He not only loved the promises, but loved the law, and delighted in it after the inner man.

2. An unexceptionable evidence of this: what we love we love to think of: by this it appeared that David loved the word of God, it was his meditation. He not only read the book of the law, but digested what he read in his thoughts; and was delivered into it as into a mould: it was his meditation not only in the night when he was silent and solitary and had nothing else to do, but in the day, when he was full of business and company, nay, and *all the day* some good thoughts were interwoven with his common thoughts; so full was he of the word of God.

98. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.

99. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.

100. I understand more than the ancients: because I keep thy precepts.

We have here an account of David's learning, not that of the Egyptians, but of the Israelites indeed.

1. The good method by which he got it. In his youth he minded business in the country, as a shepherd; from his youth he minded business in the court and camp; which way then could he get any great stock of learning? He tells us here how he came by it:

he had it from God the author, *Thou hast made me wise*; all true wisdom is from God. He had it by the word of God, as the means; by his commandments and his testimonies. These are able to make us wise to salvation, and to furnish the man of God for every good work. 1. These David took for his constant companions, *they are ever with me*, ever in my mind, ever in my eye. A good man, wherever he goes, carries his Bible along with him, if not in his hands, yet in his head and in his heart. 2. These he took for the delightful subject of his thoughts: they were his meditation, not only as matters of speculation for his entertainment, as scholars meditate on their notions, but as matters of concern, for his right management, as men of business think of their business, that they may do it in the best manner. 3. These he took for the commanding rules of all his actions: *I keep thy precepts*, i. e. I make conscience of doing my duty in every thing. The best way to improve in knowledge, is to abide and abound in all the instances of serious godliness; for if any man do his will, he shall know of the doctrine of Christ; shall know more and more of it, *John vii. 17.* The love of the truth prepares for the light of it: the pure in heart shall see God here.

2. The great eminency he attained to in it. By studying and practising God's commandments and making them his rule, he learnt to behave himself wisely in all his ways, 1 Sam. xviii. 14.

1. He outwitted his enemies; God by these means made him wiser to baffle and defeat their designs against him, than they were to lay them. Heavenly wisdom will carry the point, at long run, against carnal policy; by keeping the commandments we secure God on our side and make him our friend, and therein are certainly wiser than those that make him their enemy. By keeping the commandments we preserve to ourselves that peace and quiet of mind which our enemies would rob us of, and so are wise for ourselves, wiser than they are for themselves, for this world as well as for the other. 2. He outstrips his teachers, and had more understanding than them all. He means either those that would have been his teachers, that blamed his conduct, and undertook to prescribe to him: by keeping God's commandments he managed his matters so that it appeared, in the event, he had taken the right measures, and they had taken the wrong. Or, those that should have been his teachers, the priests and Levites that sat in Moses's chair, and whose lips ought to have kept knowledge, but they neglected the study of the law, and minded their honours and revenues, and the formalities only of their religion; and so David, who conversed much with the scriptures, by that means became more intelligent than they. Or, those that had been his teachers when he was young, he built so well upon the foundation which they had laid, that, with the help of his Bible, he became able to teach them, to teach them all. He was not now a babe that needed milk, but had spiritual senses exercised, *Hab. v. 14.* It is no reflection upon our teachers, but rather an honour to them, to improve so as really to excel them, and not to need them. By meditation we preach to ourselves, and so we come to understand more than our teachers, for we come to understand our own hearts, which they cannot. 3. He outdid the ancients: either those of his day, he was young, like Elihu, and they were very old, but his keeping of God's precepts taught him more wisdom than the multitude of their years, *Job xxxii. 7, 8.* Or, those of former days: he himself quotes the proverb of the ancients, 1 Sam. xxiv. 13. but the word of God gave him to understand things better than he could do by tradition, and all the learning that was handed down from preceding ages. In short, the written word is a surer guide to heaven, than all the doctors and fathers, the teachers and ancients of the church; and the sacred writings kept, and kept to, will teach us more wisdom than all their writings.

101. I have refrained my feet from every evil way: that I might keep thy word.

Here is, 1. David's care to avoid the ways of sin: *I have refrained my feet from the evil ways* they were ready to step aside into, I checked myself and drew back, as soon as I was aware that I was entering into temptation. Though it was a broad way, a green way, a pleasant way, and a way that many walked in, yet, being a sinful way, it was an evil way, and he refrained his feet from it, foreseeing the end of that way. And his care was universal, he shunned every evil way. *By the words of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer*, Psal. xvii. 4.

2. His care to be found in the way of duty, *That I may keep thy word*, and never transgress it. His abstaining from sin was, 1. An evidence that he did conscientiously aim to keep God's word, and had made that his rule. 2. It was a means of his keeping God's word in the exercises of religion; for we cannot with any comfort or boldness attend on God in holy duties, so as in them to keep his word, while we are under guilt, or in any by-way.

102. I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.

Here is, 1. David's constancy in his religion. He had not departed from God's judgments; he had not chose any other rule but the word of God, nor had he wilfully deviated from that rule. A con-

A constant adherence to the ways of God in trying times will be a good evidence of our integrity.

2. The cause of his constancy; *for thou hast taught me*, i. e. they were divine instructions that I learned; I was satisfied that the doctrine was of God, and therefore I stuck to it. Or rather, It was divine grace in my heart that enabled me to receive those instructions. All the saints are taught of God, for he it is that gives the understanding; and those, and those only that are taught of God, will continue to the end in the things that they have learned.

103. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! *yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth.* 104. Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

Here is, 1. The wonderful pleasure and delight which David took in the word of God: it was *sweet to his taste, sweeter than honey*. There is such a thing as a spiritual taste, an inward savour and relish of divine things; such an evidence of them to ourselves, by experience, as we cannot give to others. We have *heard him ourselves*, John iv. 42. To this scripture-taste the word of God is sweet, very sweet, sweeter than any of the gratifications of sense, even those that are most delicious. David speaks as if he wanted words to express the satisfaction he took in the discoveries of the divine will and grace: no pleasure was comparable to it.

2. The unspeakable profit and advantage he gained by the word of God: 1. It helped him to a good head; *Through thy precepts I get understanding*, to discern between truth and falsehood, good and evil, so as not to mistake either in the conduct of my own life, or in advising others. 2. That helped him to a good heart; therefore, because I have got understanding of the truth, *I hate every false way*, and am stedfastly resolved not to turn aside into it. Observe here, That the way of sin is a *false way*, it doth deceive, and will ruin all that walk in it; it is the wrong way, and yet it seems to a man right, *Prov. xiv. 12.* That it is the character of every good man that he hates the way of sin, and hates it because it is a *false way*; he not only refrains his feet from it, *ver. 101.* but he *hates it*, has an antipathy to it, and a dread of it. That those who hate sin as sin, will hate all sin, hate *every false way*, because every false way leads to destruction. And the more understanding we get by the word of God, the more rooted will our hatred of sin be; *for to depart from evil, that is understanding*, Job xxviii. 28. and the more ready we are in the scriptures, the better furnished we are with answers to temptation.

14. N U N.

105. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Observe here, 1. The nature of the word of God, and the great intention of giving it to the world; it is a *lamp* and a *light*, it discovers to us that concerning God and ourselves, which otherwise we could not have known: it shews us what is amiss, and will be dangerous: it directs us in our work and way, and a dark place indeed the world would be without it: it is a lamp which we may set up by us, and take into our hands for our own particular use, *Prov. vi. 23.* The commandment is a lamp kept burning with the oil of the Spirit, it is like the lamps in the sanctuary and the pillar of fire to Israel.

2. The use we should make of it. It must be not only a *light to our eyes*, to gratify them, and fill our heads with speculations, but a *light to our feet and to our path*, to direct us in the right ordering of our conversation; both in the choice of our way in general, and in the particular steps we take in that way; that we may not take a *false way*, nor a false step in the right way. We are then truly sensible of God's goodness to us in giving us such a lamp and light, when we make it a guide to our feet, our path.

106. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.

Here is, 1. The notion David had of religion; it is *keeping God's righteous judgments*. God's commands are his judgments, the dictates of infinite wisdom. They are *righteous judgments*, consonant to the eternal rules of equity, and it is our duty to keep them carefully.

2. The obligation he here laid upon himself to be religious, binding himself by his own promise to that which he was already bound to by the divine precept, and all little enough. *I have sworn*, I have lift up my hand to the Lord, and I cannot go back; and therefore must go forward, *I will perform it.* Note, 1. It is good for us to bind ourselves with a solemn oath to be religious. We must swear to the Lord as subjects swear allegiance to their sovereign, promising fealty, appealing to God concerning our sincerity in this promise, and owning ourselves liable to the curse if we do not perform it. 2. We must often call to mind the vows of God that are upon us, and remember that we have sworn. 3. We must make conscience of performing unto the Lord our oaths: an honest man will be as good as his word: nor have we sworn

to our own hurt, but it will be unspeakably to our hurt if we do not perform.

107. I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word.

Here is, 1. The remonstrance David makes of the sorrowful condition he was in: *I am afflicted very much*; afflicted in spirit, he seems to mean that especially: he laboured under many discouragements, without were fightings, within were fears: this is often the lot of the best saints, therefore think it not strange if sometimes it be ours.

2. The recourse he has to God in this condition; he prays for his grace, *Quicken me, O Lord*, make me lively, make me chearful, quicken me by thy afflictions to greater diligence in my work; *quicken me*, i. e. deliver me out of my afflictions, which will be as life from the dead. He pleads the promise of God, guides his desires by it, and grounds his hopes upon it, *quicken me according to thy word.* David resolved to perform his promises to God, *ver. 106.* and therefore could with humble boldness beg of God to make good his word to him.

108. Accept, I beseech thee, the free-will-offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me thy judgments.

Two things we are here taught to pray for, in reference to our religious performances.

1. Acceptance of them: this we must aim at in all we do in religion, that whether present or absent we may be accepted of the Lord. That which David here earnestly prays for the acceptance of, is the *free-will-offerings*, not of his purse, but of his mouth, his prayers and praises, *the calves of our lips*, Hos. xiv. 2. *the fruit of our lips*, Heb. xiii. 15. these are the spiritual offerings which all christians, as spiritual priests, must offer to God; and they must be *free-will-offerings*, for we must offer them abundantly and chearfully: and it is this willing mind that is accepted. The more there is of freeness and willingness in the service of God, the more pleasing it is to him.

2. Assistance in them: *Teach me thy judgments.* We cannot offer any thing to God which we have reason to think he will accept of, but what he is pleased to instruct us in the doing of, and we must be as earnest for the grace of God in us, as for the favour of God towards us.

109. My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law. 110. The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from thy precepts.

Here is, 1. David in danger of losing his life. There is but a step between him and death, for the *wicked have laid a snare* for him; Saul did so many a time, because he hated him for his piety. Wherever he was he found some design or other laid against him to take away his life, for that was it they aimed at; what they could not effect by open force they hoped to compass by treachery; which made him say, *My soul is continually in my hand*: it was not so only as a man, so it is true of us all, wherever we are we lie exposed to the strokes of death; what we carry in our hands is easily snatched away from us by violence, or (if sandy, as our life is) it easily of itself slips through our fingers: but, as a man of war, a soldier that oft jeopardied his life in the high places of the field: and especially as a man after God's own heart, and, as such, hated and persecuted, and always delivered to death, *2 Cor. iv. 11. killed all the day long.*

2. David in no danger of losing his religion for all this. Thus in jeopardy every hour, and yet constant to God and his duty; none of these things move him, for, 1. He *doth not forget the law*, and therefore he is likely to persevere. In the multitude of his cares for his own safety he finds room in his head and heart for the word of God, and has that in his mind as fresh as ever, and where that dwells richly, it will be a *well of living water*. 2. He hath not yet erred from God's precepts, and therefore it is to be hoped he will not. He had stood many a shock and kept his ground, and sure that grace which had helped him hitherto would not fail him, but would still prevent his wandrings.

111. Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart. 112. I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end.

The psalmist here, in a most affectionate manner, like an Israelite indeed, resolves to stick to the word of God, and to live and die by it.

1. He resolves to portion himself in it, and there to seek his happiness, nay, there to enjoy it: *Thy testimonies*, the truths, the promises of thy word, *have I taken as an heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart*: the present delight he took in them was an evidence that the good things contained in them were, in his

his account, the best things, and the treasure which he set his heart upon. 1. He expected an eternal happiness in God's testimonies; the covenant God had made with him was an everlasting covenant, and therefore he took it as *an heritage for ever*. If he could not yet say, *they are my heritage*, yet he could say, I have *made choice* of them for my heritage; and will never take up with a *portion in this life*, Psal. xvii. 14, 15. God's testimonies are an heritage to all that have received the spirit of adoption; for, *if children, then heirs*; they are an *heritage for ever*, and that no earthly heritage is, 1 Pet. i. 4. all the saints accept them as such, take up with them, live upon them, and can therefore take up with a little of this world. 2. He enjoyed a present satisfaction in them; *They are the rejoicing of my heart*, because they will be *my heritage for ever*. It requireth the heart of a good man to see his portion in the promise of God, and not in the possession of this world.

2. He resolves to govern himself by it, and thence to take his measures: *I have inclined my heart to do thy statutes*. They that would have the blessings of God's testimonies must come under the bonds of his statutes. We must look for comfort only in the way of duty, and that duty must be done, 1. With full consent and complacency; *I have*, by the grace of God, *inclined my heart to it*, and conquered the aversion I had to it. A good man brings his heart to his work, and then it is done well. A gracious disposition to do the will of God is the acceptable principle of all obedience. 2. With constancy and perseverance: He would perform God's statutes always, in all instances, in the duty of every day, in a constant course of holy walking, and this *to the end*, without weariness. This is following the Lord fully.

15. SAMECH.

113. I hate *vain* thoughts: but thy law do I love.

Here is, 1. David's dread of the risings of sin, and the first beginnings of it: *I hate vain thoughts*. He doth not mean that he hated them in others, for there he could not discern them, but he hated them in his own heart. Every good man makes conscience of his thoughts, for they are words to God: vain thoughts, how light soever most make of them, are sinful and hurtful, and therefore we should account them hateful and dreadful, for they not only divert the mind from that which is good, but open the door to all evil, Jer. iv. 14. Though David could not say he was free from vain thoughts, yet he could say *he hated them*, he did not countenance them, or give them any entertainment, but did what he could to keep them out, at least to keep them under. *The evil I do, I allow not*.

2. David's delight in the rule of duty, but *thy law do I love*, which forbids those vain thoughts, and threatens them. The more we love the law of God, the more we shall get the mastery of our vain thoughts, the more hateful they will be to us, as being contrary to the whole law, and the more watchful we shall be against them, lest they draw us from that we love.

114. Thou *art* my hiding place, and my shield: I hope in thy word.

Here is, (1.) God's care of David to protect and defend him, which he comforts himself with, when his enemies were very malicious against him; *Thou art my hiding-place and my shield*. David, when Saul pursued him, often betook himself to close places for shelter. In war he guarded himself with his shield, now God was both these to him: A hiding-place to preserve him from danger, and a shield to preserve him in danger, his life from death, and his soul from sin. Good people are safe under God's protection; He is their *strength and their shield*, their *help and their shield*; their *sun and their shield*; their *shield and their great reward*; and here, their *hiding-place and their shield*. They may by faith retire to him, and repose in him as their hiding-place, where they are kept in secret: They may by faith oppose his power to all the might and malice of their enemies, as their shield to quench every fiery dart.

(2.) David's confidence in God; he is safe, and therefore he is easy under the divine protection. I hope in thy word, which has acquainted me with thee, and assured me of thy kindness to me. They who depend on God's promise, shall have the benefit of his power, and be taken under his special protection.

115. Depart from me, ye evil doers; for I will keep the commandments of my God.

Here is, 1. David's firm and fixed resolution to live a holy life; *I will keep the commandments of my God*. Bravely resolved, like a saint, like a soldier; for true courage consists in a steady resolution against all sin, and for all duty. Those that would keep God's commandments must be often renewing their resolutions to do so. *I will keep them*. Whatever others do, this I will do; though I be singular, though all about me be evil-doers and desert me; whatever I have done hitherto, I will for the future walk closely with God. They are the commandments of God, of my God, and therefore I will keep them. He is God, and may command me; my God, and will command me nothing but what is for my good.

2. His farewell to bad company, pursuant to this resolution; *Depart from me, ye evil doers*. Though David, as a good magistrate, was a terror to evil doers, yet there were many such, even about court, intruding near his person, these he here abdicates, and resolves to have no conversation with them. Note, They that resolve to keep the commandments of God, must have no society with evil doers; for bad company is a great hindrance to a holy life. We must not choose wicked people for our companions, nor be intimate with them; we must not do as they do, nor do as they would have us do, Psal. i. 1. Eph. v. 11.

116. Uphold me, according unto thy word, that I may live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope.
117. Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.

Here, 1. David prays for sustaining grace; for this grace sufficient, he besought the Lord twice; *Uphold me*, and again, *Hold thou me up*. He sees himself not only unable to go on in his duty by any strength of his own, but in danger of falling into sin, unless he was prevented by divine grace; and therefore he is thus earnest for that grace to uphold him in his integrity, Psalm xli. 12. to keep him from falling, and to keep him from tiring, that he might neither turn aside to evil doing, nor be weary of well doing. We stand no longer than God holds us, and go no further than he carries us.

2. He pleads earnestly for this grace.

(1.) He pleads the promise of God, his dependence upon the promise, and his expectation from it: *Uphold me, according to thy word*, which word I hope in; and if it be not performed, I shall be made *ashamed of my hope*, and be called a fool for my credulity. But they that hope in God's word, may be sure that the word will not fail them, and therefore their hope will not make them ashamed.

(2.) He pleads the great need he had of God's grace, and the great advantage it would be of to him; *Uphold me, that I may live*: intimating, that he could not live without the grace of God; he should fall into sin, into death, into hell, if God did not hold him up; but supported by his hand he shall live; his spiritual life shall be maintained, and be an earnest of eternal life. *Hold me up, and I shall be safe*; out of danger, and out of the fear of danger. Our holy security is grounded on divine supports.

(3.) He pleads his resolution in the strength of this grace to proceed in his duty; *Hold me up*, and then *I will have respect unto thy statutes continually*, and never turn my eyes or feet aside from them. *I will employ myself*, so some; *I will delight myself*, so others; *in thy statutes*. If God's right hand uphold us, we must in his strength go on in our duty, both with diligence and with pleasure.

118. Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes: for their deceit is falsehood. 119. Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross: therefore I love thy testimonies. 120. My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.

Here is, 1. God's judgment on wicked people, on those that *wander from his statutes*, that take their measures from other rules, and will not have God to reign over them. All departure from God's statutes is certainly an error, and will prove a fatal one. These are *the wicked of the earth*, they mind earthly things, and lay up their treasures in the earth, and live in pleasure on the earth, and are strangers and enemies to heaven, and heavenly things. Now see how God deals with them, that you may neither fear them, nor envy them. 1. He *treads them all down*; he brings them to ruin, to utter ruin, to shameful ruin; he makes them his footstool. Though they are never so high, he can bring them low, Amos ii. 9. he has done it many a time, and he will do it; for he resists the proud, and will triumph over those that oppose his kingdom. Proud persecutors trample upon his people, but sooner or later he will trample upon them. 2. He *puts them all away like dross*. Wicked people are as dross, which, though it be mingled with the good metal in the ore, and seems to be of the same substance with it, must be separated from it. And in God's account they are worthless things, the scum and refuse of the earth, and no more to be compared with the righteous, than dross with fine gold. There is a day coming which will put them away from among the righteous, Matt. xiii. 49. so that they shall have no place in their congregation, Psal. i. 5. which will put them away into everlasting fire, the fittest place for the dross. Sometimes in this world the wicked are by the censures of the church, or the sword of the magistrate, or the judgments of God, *put away as dross*, Prov. xxv. 4, 5.

2. The reasons of these judgments. God casts them off, because they *err from his statutes*; they that will not submit to the commands of the word, shall feel the curses of it. And because *their deceit is falsehood*, i. e. because they deceive themselves by setting up false rules in opposition to God's statutes, which they err from; and because they go about to deceive others with their hypocritical pretences of good, and their crafty projects of mischief. Their

Their cunning is falshood, so Dr. Hammond. The utmost of their policy is treachery and perfidiousness: this the God of truth hates, and will punish.

3. The improvement David made of these judgments; he took notice of them, and received instruction from them. The ruin of the wicked helped to increase, 1. His love to the word of God; I see what comes of sin, *therefore I love thy testimonies*, which warn me to take heed of those dangerous courses, and *keep me from the paths of the destroyer*. We see the word of God fulfilled in his judgments on sin and sinners, and therefore we should love it. 2. His fear of the wrath of God: *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee*. Instead of insulting over those who fell under God's displeasure, he humbled himself. What we read and hear of the judgments of God upon wicked people, should make us, (1.) To reverence his terrible majesty, and to stand in awe of him; *Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?* 1 Sam. vi. 20. (2.) To fear lest we offend him, and become obnoxious to his wrath. Good men have need to be restrained from sin by *the terrors of the Lord*; especially when judgment begins at the house of God, and hypocrites are discovered, and *put away as dross*.

16. A I N.

121. I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors. 122. Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.

David here appeals to God;

1. As his witness, that he had not done wrong: he could truly say, *I have done judgment and justice*, i. e. I have made conscience of rendering to all their due, and have not by force or fraud hindered any of their right. Take him as a king, he *executeth judgment and justice to all his people*, 2 Sam. viii. 15. take him in a private capacity, he could appeal to Saul himself, that *there was no evil or transgression in his hand*, 1 Sam. xxiv. 11. Note, Honesty is the best policy, and will be our rejoicing in the day of evil.

2. As his judge, that he might not be wronged; he having done justice for others that were oppressed, he begs that God would do him justice, and avenge him of his adversaries. *Be surety for thy servant for good*, i. e. undertake for me against those that would run me down, and ruin me. He is sensible that he cannot make his part good himself, and therefore begs that God would appear for him. Christ is our surety with God; and if he be so, providence shall be our surety against all the world; who or what shall harm us, if God's power and goodness be engaged for our protection and rescue? He doth not prescribe to God what he should do for him, only let it be *for good*, in such way and manner as infinite wisdom sees best; only *let me not be left to mine oppressors*. Though David had *done judgment and justice*, yet he had many enemies; but, having God for his friend, he hoped they should not have their will against him; and in that hope he prayed again, *Let not the proud oppress me*. David, one of the best of men, was oppressed by the proud, whom God beholds afar off: the condition therefore of the persecuted is better than that of the persecutors, and will appear so at last.

123. Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness.

David, being oppressed, is here waiting and wishing for the salvation of the Lord, which would make him easy.

1. He cannot but think that it comes slowly: *Mine eyes fail for thy salvation*. His eyes were towards it, and had been long so: he looked for help from heaven, and we deceive ourselves if we look for it any other way; but it did not come so soon as he expected, so that his eyes began to fail, and he was sometimes ready to despair, and to think, that because the salvation did not come when he looked for it, it would never come. It is often the infirmity even of good men to be weary of waiting God's time, when their time is lapsed.

2. Yet he cannot but hope that it comes surely; for he expects *the word of God's righteousness*, and no other salvation but what is secured by that word, which cannot fall to the ground, because it is a word of righteousness. Though our eyes fail, yet God's word doth not, and therefore those that build upon it, though now discouraged, shall in due time see his salvation.

124. Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes. 125. I am thy servant, give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.

Here is, 1. David's petition for divine instruction: *Teach me thy statutes*. Give me to know all my duty; when I am in doubt, and know not for certain what is my duty, direct me, and make it plain to me: Now I am afflicted, oppressed, and *mine eyes* ready to fail for thy salvation, let me know what my duty is in this condition. In difficult times, we should desire more to be told what we must do, than what we may expect; and should pray more to be led into the knowledge of scripture precepts, than of scripture pro-

phesies. If God that gave us his statutes do not teach us, we shall never learn them. How God teaches is implied in the next petition, *Give me understanding*, a renewed understanding, apt to receive divine light; *that I may know thy testimonies*. It is God's prerogative to give an understanding, that understanding without which we cannot know God's testimonies. Those that know most of God's testimonies desire to know more, and are still earnest with God to teach them, never thinking they know enough.

2. His pleas to enforce this petition.

(1.) He pleads God's goodness to him: *Deal with me according to thy mercy*. The best saints count this their best plea for any blessing; let me have it *according to thy mercy*; for we deserve no favour from God, nor can we claim any as a debt, but we are then most likely to be easy, when we cast ourselves upon God's mercy, and refer ourselves to it. Particularly, when we come to him for instruction, we must beg it as a mercy, and reckon that in being taught we are well dealt with.

(2.) He pleads his relation to God: *I am thy servant*, and have work to do for thee, therefore *teach me* to do it, and to do it well. The servant hath reason to expect, that if he be at a loss about his work, his master should teach him, and, if it were in his power, give him an understanding. Lord, saith David, I desire to serve thee, shew me how. If any man resolve to do God's will as his servant, he shall be made to know his testimonies, *John viii. 17. Psalm xxv. 14.*

126. It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law.

Here is, 1. A complaint of the daring impiety of the wicked; David having in himself a holy indignation at it, humbly represents it to God. Lord, there are those that *have made void thy law*, have set thee and thy government at defiance, and have done what in them lay to cancel and vacate the obligation of thy commands. They that sin through infirmity transgress the law, but presumptuous sinners do, in effect, *make void the law*, saying, *Who is the Lord? what is the Almighty that we should fear him?* It is possible a godly man may sin against the commandment, but a wicked man would sin away the commandment; would repeal God's laws, and enact his own lusts. This is the sinfulness of sin, and the malignity of the carnal mind.

2. A desire that God would appear for the vindication of his own honour. *It is time for thee, Lord, to work*, to do something for the effectual confutation of atheists and infidels, and the silencing of those that set their mouth against the heavens. God's time to work is when vice is become most daring, and the measure of iniquity is full: *Now will I arise, saith the Lord*. Some read it, and the original will bear it, *It is time to work for thee, O Lord*; it is time for every one in his place to appear on the Lord's side, against the threatening growth of profaneness and immorality. We must do what we can for the support of the sinking interests of religion, and after all we must beg of God to take the work into his own hands.

127. Therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold. 128. Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.

David here, as often in this psalm, professeth the great love he had to the word and law of God; and to evidence the sincerity of it, observe,

1. The degree of his love. He loved his bible better than he loved his money; *above gold, yea, above fine gold*. Gold, fine gold, is what the most of men set their hearts upon, nothing charms them, and dazzles their eyes so as gold doth; it is fine gold, a fine thing in their eyes: they will venture their souls, their God, their all, to get and keep it: but David saw that the word of God answers all things better than money doth; for it enricheth the soul towards God, and therefore he loved it better than gold; for it had done that for him which gold could not do, and would stand him in stead when the wealth of the world would fail him.

2. The ground of his love. Therefore he loved all God's commandments, because he esteemed them to be right, all reasonable and just, and suited to the end for which they were made. They are all as they should be, and no fault can be found with them, and therefore we must love them, because they bear God's image, and are the revelations of his will. If we thus *consent to the law that it is good*, we shall delight in it after the inner man.

3. The fruit and evidence of this love. He *hated every false way*. The way of sin being directly contrary to God's precepts that are right, is a false way, and therefore they that have a love and esteem for God's law, hate it, and will not be reconciled to it.

17. P E.

129. Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them.

See here, how David was affected towards the word of God.

1. He

1. He admired it, as most excellent in it self: *Thy testimonies are wonderful.* The word of God gives us admirable discoveries of God, and Christ, and another world; admirable proofs of divine love and grace. The majesty of the style, the purity of the matter, the harmony of the parts, are all wonderful: its effects upon the consciences of men, both for conviction and comfort, are wonderful; and it is a sign we are not acquainted with God's testimonies, or do not understand them, if we do not admire them.

2. He adhered to it, as of constant use to him: *Therefore doth my soul keep them,* as a treasure of inestimable value, which I cannot be without. We do not keep them to any purpose, unless our souls keep them; there they must be deposited, as the tables of testimony in the ark, there they must have the innermost, and uppermost place. They that see God's word to be admirable, will prize it highly, and preserve it carefully, as that which they promise themselves great things from.

130. The entrance of thy words giveth light: it giveth understanding unto the simple.

Here is, 1. The great use for which the word of God was intended; to give light, that is, to give understanding; to give us to understand that which will be of use to us in our travels through this world; and it is the outward and ordinary means by which the Spirit of God enlightens the understandings of all that are sanctified. God's testimonies are not only wonderful for the greatness of them, but useful, as a light in a dark place.

2. Its efficacy for this purpose; it answers the end to admiration; for, 1. *Even the entrance of God's word gives light.* If we begin at the beginning, and take it before us, we shall find, that the very first verses of the bible give us surprizing, and yet satisfying discoveries of the origin of the universe, about which, without that, the world is utterly in the dark. As soon as the word of God enters into us, and has a place in us, it enlightens us; we find we begin to see, when we begin to study the word of God. The very first principles of the oracles of God, the plainest truths, the milk appointed for the babes, brings a great light into the soul, much more will the soul be illuminated by the sublime mysteries that are found there. The exposition or explication of thy word giveth light; then it is most profitable, when ministers do their part in giving the sense, Neh. viii. 8. Some understand it of the New Testament, which is the opening or unfolding of the Old, which would give light concerning life and immortality. 2. It would give understanding even to the simple, to the weakest capacities; for it sheweth us a way to heaven so plain, that the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.

131. I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.

Here is, 1. The desire David had towards the word of God: *I longed for thy commandments.* When he was under a forced absence from God's ordinances, he longed to be restored to them again; when he enjoyed ordinances, he greedily sucked in the word of God, as new born babes desire the milk. When Christ is formed in the soul, there are gracious longings, unaccountable to one that is a stranger to the work.

2. The degree of that desire appearing in the expressions of it: *I opened my mouth, and panted;* as one overcome with heat, or almost stifled, pants for a mouthful of fresh air. Thus strong, thus earnest, should our desires be towards God, and the remembrance of his name, Psal. xlii. 1, 2. Luke xii. 50.

132. Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.

Here is, 1. David's request for God's favour to himself. *Look graciously upon me,* let me have thy smiles, and the light of thy countenance; take cognizance of me, and my affairs, and be merciful to me; let me taste the sweetness of thy mercy, and receive the gifts of thy mercy. See how humble his petition is; he asks not for the operations of God's hand; only for the smiles of his face; a good look is enough; and for that he doth not plead merit, but implores mercy.

2. His acknowledgment of his favour to all his people. *As thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.* Which speaks, either, 1. A plea for mercy: Lord, I am one of those that love thy name, love thee and thy word, and thou usest to be kind to those that do so; and wilt thou be worse to me than to others of thy people? Or, 2. A description of the favour and mercy he desired, that which thou usest to bestow on those that love thy name, which thou bearest to thy chosen, Psal. cvi. 4, 5. He desires no more, no better than neighbours fare, and he will take up with no less; common looks and common mercies will not serve, but such as are reserved for those that love him; which are such as *eye hath not seen*, 1 Cor. ii. 9. Note, The dealings of God with them that love him are such, that a man needs not desire to be any better dealt with, for he will make them truly and eternally happy. And as long as God deals with us no otherwise than as he useth to deal with those that love him, we have no reason to complain, 1 Cor.

x. 13.

133. Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

Here David prays for two great spiritual blessings, and is in this verse as earnest for the good work of God in him, as in the verse before for the good will of God towards him. He prays,

1. For direction in the paths of duty: *Order my steps in thy word.* Having led me into the right way, let every step I take in that way be under the conduct of thy grace. We ought to walk by rule; all the motions of the soul must not only be kept within the bounds prescribed by the word, so as not to transgress them, but carried out in the paths prescribed by the word, so as not to trifle in them. And therefore we must beg of God, that by his good Spirit he would order our steps accordingly.

2. For deliverance from the power of sin. *Let no iniquity have dominion over me,* so as to gain my consent to it, and that I should be led captive by it. The dominion of sin is to be dreaded and deprecated by every one of us; and if in sincerity we pray against it, we may receive that promise as an answer to the prayer, Rom. vi. 14. *Sin shall not have dominion over you.*

134. Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts.

Here, 1. David prays, that he might live a quiet and peaceable life, and might not be harassed and discomposed by those that studied to be vexatious. *Deliver me from the oppression of man;* man, whom God can controul, and whose power is limited; let them know themselves to be but men, Psal. ix. ult. and let me be delivered out of the hands of unreasonable men.

2. He promiseth that then he would live in all godliness and honesty. Let me be delivered out of the hands of my enemies, that I may serve God without fear. *So will I keep thy precepts:* not but that he would keep God's precepts, though he should be continued under oppression: But so shall I keep thy precepts more cheerfully, and with more enlargement of heart, my bonds being loosed. Then we may expect temporal blessings when we desire them with this in our eye, that we may serve God the better.

135. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: and teach me thy statutes.

David here, as often elsewhere, writes himself God's servant, a title he gloried in, though he was a king: now here, as became a good servant,

1. He is very ambitious of his Master's favour, accounting that his happiness and chiefest good. He asks not for corn and wine, for silver and gold, but *make thy face to shine upon thy servant*, i. e. let me be accepted of thee, and let me know that I am so. Comfort me with the light of thy countenance in every cloudy and dark day; if the world frown upon me, yet do thou smile.

2. He is very solicitous about his master's work, accounting that his business and chief concern: this he would be instructed in that he might do it, and do it well, so as to be accepted in the doing of it: *Teach me thy statutes.* Note, We must pray as earnestly for grace as for comfort. If God hides his face from us, it is because we have been careless in keeping his statutes; and therefore that we may be qualified for the returns of his favour, we must pray for wisdom to do our duty.

136. Rivers of waters run down mine eyes: because they keep not thy law.

Here we have David in sorrow.

1. It is great sorrow; to that degree, that he weeps *rivers of tears*; commonly where there is a gracious heart, there is a weeping eye, in conformity to Christ, who was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. David had prayed for comfort in God's favour, ver. 135. now he pleads that he was qualified for that comfort, and had need of it, for he was one of them that mourned in Sion, and they that do so shall be comforted, Isa. lxi. 3.

2. It is godly sorrow. He wept not for his troubles, though they were many, but for the dishonour to God, *because they keep not thy law.* Either *because mine eyes keep not thy law*, so some. The eye is the inlet and outlet of a great deal of sin, and therefore it ought to be a weeping eye. Or rather, *they*, i. e. *those about me*, ver. 139. Note, The sins of sinners are the sorrows of saints. We must mourn for that which we cannot mend.

18. TSADDI.

137. Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments. 138. Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded, are righteous, and very faithful.

Here is, 1. The righteousness of God, the infinite rectitude and perfection of his nature: as he is what he is, so he is what he should be, and in every thing acts as becomes him: there is nothing wanting, nothing amiss in God; his will is the eternal rule of equity, and he is righteous, for he doth all according to it.

2. The

2. The righteousness of his government. He rules the world by his providence, according to the principles of justice, and never did, nor ever can, do any wrong to any of his creatures. *Upright are thy judgments*, the promises and threatnings are executions of both: every word of God is pure, and he will be true to it: he perfectly knows the merits of every cause, and will judge accordingly.

3. The righteousness of his commands, which he hath given to be the rule of our obedience. *Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded*, which are backed with thy sovereign authority, and to which thou dost require our obedience, are exceeding righteous and faithful; righteousness and faithfulness it self. As he acts like himself, so his law requires that we act like ourselves, and like him; that we be just to ourselves, and to all we deal with, true to all the engagements we lay ourselves under both to God and man. That which we are commanded to practise is righteous, that which we are commanded to believe is faithful: It is necessary to our faith and obedience that we be convinced of this.

139. My zeal hath consumed me: because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.

Here is, 1. The great contempt which wicked men put upon religion: *Mine enemies have forgotten thy words*. They have often heard them, but so little did they heed them, that they soon forgot them, they willingly forgot them; not only through carelessness let them slip out of their minds, but contrived how to cast them behind their backs. This is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked, and particularly of their malignity and enmity to the people of God, they have forgotten the words of God, else those would give check to their sinful courses.

2. The great concern which godly men shew for religion. David reckoned those his enemies that forgot the words of God, because they were enemies to religion, which he had entered into a league with offensive and defensive. And therefore his zeal even consumed him, when he observed their impieties. He conceived such an indignation at their wickedness, as even preyed upon his spirits, even *eat them up*, as Christ's zeal, *John ii. 17.* swallowed up all inferior considerations, and made him forget himself. *My zeal has pressed or constrained me*; so Dr. Hammond reads it, *Acts xviii. 5.* Zeal against sin should constrain us to do what we can against it in our places, at least to do so much the more in religion our selves. The worse others are, the better we should be.

140. Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.

Here is, 1. David's great affection for the word of God: *Thy servant loves it*. Every good man, being a servant of God, loves the word of God, because it lets him know his master's will, and directs him in his master's work. Wherever there is grace, there is a dear love to the word of God.

2. The ground and reason of that affection: he saw it *very pure*, and therefore he loved it. Our love to the word of God is then an evidence of our love to God, when we love it for the sake of its purity; because it bears the image of God's holiness, and is designed to make us partakers of his holiness: it commands purity, and, as it is itself refined from all corrupt mixture, so if we receive it in the light and love of it, it will refine us from the dross of worldliness and fleshly-mindedness.

141. I am small and despised: yet do not I forget thy precepts.

Here is, 1. David pious, and yet poor. He was a man after God's own heart, one whom the King of kings did delight to honour, and yet *small and despised* in his own account, and in the account of many others. Mens real excellency cannot always secure them from contempt; nay, it exposeth them many times to the scorn of some, and always makes them low in their own eyes. *God has chosen the foolish things of the world*, and it has been the common lot of his people to be a despised people.

2. David poor, and yet pious; *small and despised* for his strict and serious godliness; yet his conscience can witness for him, that he did not forget God's precepts. He will not throw off his religion, though it expose him to contempt, for he knew that was designed to try his constancy. When we are *small and despised*, we have the more need to remember God's precepts, that we may have them to support us under the pressures of a low condition.

142. Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.

Observe, 1. That God's word is *righteousness*, and it is an *everlasting righteousness*; it is the rule of God's judgment, and it is consonant to his counsels from eternity, and will direct his sentence for eternity. The word of God will judge us, it will judge us in righteousness, and by it our everlasting state will be determined. This should possess us with a very great reverence for the word of

God, that it is righteousness it self, the standard of righteousness, and it is everlasting in its rewards and punishments.

2. That God's word is a law, and that law is truth. See the double obligation we are under to be governed by the word of God; we are reasonable creatures, and as such we must be ruled by truth, acknowledging the force and power of it. If the principles be true, the practices must be agreeable to them, else we do not act rationally. We are creatures, and therefore subjects, and must be ruled by our Creator; and whatever he commands we are bound to obey as a law. See how these obligations are here twisted, these cords of a man: here is truth brought to the understanding, there to fit chief, and direct the motions of the whole man. But, lest the authority of that should become weak through the flesh, here is a law to bind the will, and bring that into subjection. God's truth is a law, (*John xviii. 37.*) and *God's law is the truth*; sure we cannot break such words as these asunder.

143. Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: yet thy commandments are my delights. 144. The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.

These two verses are almost a repetition of the two foregoing verses, but with improvement.

1. He again professeth his constant adherence to God and his duty, notwithstanding the many difficulties and discouragements he met with. He had said, *ver. 141.* *I am small and despised*, and yet stick to my duty; here he finds himself not only mean, but miserable, as far as this world could make him so. *Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me*; trouble without, anguish within, those surprized him, they seized him, they held him: Sorrows are often the lot of saints in this vale of tears, they are *in heaviness through manifold temptations*. There he had said, *yet do I not forget thy precepts*; here he carries his constancy much higher; *yet thy commandments are my delights*. All his trouble and anguish did not put his mouth out of taste to the comforts of the word of God, but he could still relish them, and find that peace and pleasure in them, which all the calamities of this present time could not deprive him of. There are delights, variety of delights, in the word of God, which the saints have many times the sweetest enjoyment of, when they are in trouble and anguish, *2 Cor. i. 5.*

2. He again acknowledgeth the everlasting righteousness of God's word as before, *ver. 142.* *The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting*, and cannot be altered; and when it is admitted in its power into a soul, it is there an abiding principle, *a well of living water*, *John iv. 14.* We ought to meditate much and often upon the equity and the eternity of the word of God. Here he adds, by way of inference, 1. His prayer for grace: *Give me understanding*. Those that know much of the word of God should still covet to know more; for there is more to be known. He doth not say, give me a further revelation, but *give me a further understanding*; what is revealed we should desire to understand, and what we know to know better; and we must go to God for a heart to know. 2. His hope of glory. Give me this renewed understanding, and then *I shall live*; shall live for ever, shall be eternally happy, and shall be comforted for the present in the prospect of it. *This is life eternal to know God*, *John xvii. 3.*

19. K O P H.

145. I cried with my whole heart, hear me, O LORD: I will keep thy statutes. 146. I cried unto thee, save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.

Here is, 1. David's good prayers, by which he sought to God for mercy; these he mentions here, not as boasting of them, or trusting to any merit in them, but reflecting upon them with comfort, that he had taken the appointed way to comfort. Observe here, (1.) That he was inward with God in prayer; he prayed *with his heart*, and the prayer is acceptable no further than the heart goes along with it. Lip-labour, if that be all, is lost labour. (2.) He was importunate with God in prayer; he cried, as one in earnest, with fervour of affection, and a holy vehemence, and vigour of desire. He *cried with his whole heart*, all the powers of his soul were not only engaged and employed, but exerted to the utmost in his prayers. Then we are likely to speed when we thus strive and wrestle in prayer. (3.) That he directed his prayer to God: *I cried unto thee*. Whither should the child go but to his father, when any thing ails him? (4.) That the great thing he prayed for was salvation: *Save me*. A short prayer; for we mistake if we think we shall be heard for our much speaking; but a comprehensive prayer; not only rescue me from ruin, but make me happy. We need desire no more but *God's salvation*, *Psal. l. ult.* and the things that accompany it, *Heb. vi. 9.* (5.) That he was earnest for an answer; and not only looked up in his prayers, but looked up after them, to see what became of them, *Psal. v. 3.* Lord, *hear me*, and let me know that thou hearest me.

2. David's good purposes, by which he bound himself to duty, when he was in the pursuit of mercy. *I will keep thy statutes*; I am resolved by thy grace I will: for *if we turn away our ear from*

hearing the law, we cannot expect an answer of peace to our prayers, *Prov. xxviii. 9.* This purpose is used as an humble plea, *ver. 146.* Save me from my sins, my corruptions, my temptations, all the hindrances that lie in my way, that I may keep thy testimonies. We must cry for salvation, not that we may have the ease and comfort of it, but that we may have an opportunity of serving God the more chearfully.

147. I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word. 148. Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word.

David goes on here to relate how he had abounded in the duty of prayer, much to his comfort and advantage: he cried unto God, *i. e.* offered up to him his pious and devout affections with all seriousness. Observe,

1. The handmaids of his devotion. The two great exercises that attended his prayers, and were helpful to them, were, (1.) Hope in God's word, which encouraged him to continue instant in prayer, though the answer did not come presently. I cried, and hoped that at last I should speed, because *the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and not lie.* I hoped in thy word, which I knew would not fail me. (2.) Meditation in God's word. The more intimately we converse with the word of God, and the more we dwell upon it in our thoughts, the better able we shall be to speak to God in his own language, and the better we shall know what to pray for as we ought. Reading the word will not serve, but we must meditate in it.

2. The hours of his devotion: he prevented the dawning of the morning; nay, and the night watches. See here, 1. That David was an early riser, which, perhaps, contributed to his eminency. He was none of those that say, *Yet a little sleep.* 2. That he began the day with God; the first thing he did in the morning, before he admitted any business, was to pray; when his mind was most fresh, and in the best frame. If our first thoughts in the morning be of God, it will help to keep us in his fear all the day long. 3. That his mind was so full of God, and the cares and delights of his religion, that a little sleep served his turn; even in the night watches, when he awaked from his first sleep, he would rather meditate and pray, than turn him, and go sleep again. He esteemed the words of God's mouth more than his necessary repose, which we can as ill want as our food, *Job xxiii. 12.* 4. That he would redeem time for religious exercises; he was full of business all day, but that will excuse no man from secret devotion; it is better take time from sleep, as David did, than not find time for prayer. And this is our comfort when we pray in the night, that we can never come unseasonably to the throne of grace; for we may have access to it at all hours. Baal may be asleep, but Israel's God never slumbers, nor are there any hours in which he may not be spoken with.

149. Hear my voice according unto thy loving kindness: O LORD, quicken me according to thy judgment.

Here, 1. David applies himself to God for grace and comfort, with much solemnity. He begs of God to hear his voice: Lord, I have something to say to thee, shall I obtain a gracious audience? Well, what has he to say? what is his petition, and what is his request? It is not long, but it has much in a little: Lord, quicken me; stir me up to that which is good, and make me vigorous and lively, and chearful in it. Let habits of grace be drawn out into act.

2. He encourageth himself to hope that he shall obtain his request; for he depends, 1. Upon God's loving kindness. He is good, therefore he will be good to me, who hope in his mercy. His loving kindness manifested to me, will help to quicken me, and put life into me. 2. Upon God's judgment, *i. e.* his wisdom. He knows what I need, and what is good for me, and therefore will quicken me. Or, his promise, the word which he hath spoken, mercy secured by the new covenant; quicken me, according to the tenor of that covenant.

150. They draw nigh, that follow after mischief: they are far from thy law. 151. Thou art near, O LORD: and all thy commandments are truth.

Here is, 1. The apprehension David was in of danger from his enemies. (1.) They were very malicious, and industrious, in prosecuting their malicious designs; they follow after mischief; any mischief they could do to David or his friends, they would let slip no opportunity, nor let fall any pursuit that might be to his hurt. (2.) They were very impious, and had no fear of God before their eyes: They are far from thy law; setting themselves as far as they can out of the reach of its convictions and commands. The persecutors of God's people are such as make light of God himself, we may therefore be sure that God will take his people's part against them. (3.) They followed him close, and he was just ready to fall into their hands: They draw nigh, nigher than they were, so

that they got ground of him: they were at his heels, just upon his back. God sometimes suffers persecutors to prevail very far against his people, so that, as David said, *1 Sam. xxi. 3.* There is but a step between them and death. Perhaps, this comes in here, as a reason why David was so earnest in prayer, *ver. 149.* God brings us into imminent perils, as he did Jacob, that, like him, we may wrestle for a blessing.

2. The assurance David had of protection with God. They draw nigh to destroy me, but thou art near, O Lord, to save me; not only mightier than they, and therefore able to help me against them, but nearer than they, and therefore ready to help. It is the happiness of the saints that when trouble is near, God is near, and no trouble can separate between them and him. He is never far to seek, but he is within our call, and means are within his call, *Deut. iv. 7.* All thy commandments are truth. The enemies thought to defeat the promises God had made to David, but he was sure it was out of their power, they were inviolably true, and would be infallibly performed.

152. Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old, that thou hast founded them for ever.

This confirms what he had said in the close of the foregoing verses, *All thy commandments are truth*; he means the covenant, the word which God has commanded to a thousand generations. This is firm, as true as truth itself. For,

1. God has founded it so; he has framed it for a perpetuity; such is the constitution of it, and so well ordered is it in all things, that it cannot but be sure: The promises are founded for ever, so that when heaven and earth are passed away, every iota and tittle of the promise shall stand firm, *2 Cor. i. 20.*

2. David had found it so; both by a work of God's grace upon his heart, begetting in him a full persuasion of the truth of God's word, and enabling him to rely upon it with a full satisfaction; and by the works of his providence on his behalf, fulfilling the promise beyond what he expected. Thus he knew of old, from the days of his youth, ever since he began to look towards God, that the word of God is what one may venture one's all upon. This assurance was confirmed by the observations and experiences of his own life all along, and of others that had gone before him in the ways of God. All that ever dealt with God, and trusted in him, will own that they have found him faithful.

20. R E S H.

153. Consider mine affliction, and deliver me: for I do not forget thy law. 154. Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word.

Here, 1. David prays for succour in distress. *Is any afflicted? let him pray*; let him pray as David doth here. (1.) He hath an eye to God's pity, and prays, *Consider mine affliction*; take it into thy thoughts, and all the circumstances of it, and sit not by as one unconcerned. God is never unmindful of his people's afflictions, but he will have us to put him in remembrance, *Isa. xliii. 26.* to spread our case before him, and then leave it to his compassionate consideration, to do in it as in his wisdom he shall think fit, in his own time and way. (2.) He has an eye to God's power, and prays, *deliver me*; and again, *deliver me*. Consider my troubles, and bring me out of them. God has promised deliverance, *Psal. l. 15.* and we may pray for it, with submission to his will, and with regard to his glory, that we may serve him the better. (3.) He has an eye to God's righteousness, and prays, *Plead my cause*: Be thou my patron and advocate, and take me for thy client: David had a just cause, but his adversaries were many and mighty, and he was in danger of being run down by them: he therefore begs of God to clear his integrity, and silence their false accusations. If God do not plead his people's cause, who will? He is righteous, and they commit themselves to him, and therefore he will do it, and do it effectually, *Isa. li. 22.* *Jer. l. 34.* (4.) He has an eye to God's grace, and prays, *Quicken me*. Lord, I am weak, and unable to bear my troubles; my spirit is apt to droop and sink: O that thou wouldst revive and comfort me, till the deliverance is wrought!

2. He pleads his dependence upon the word of God, and his devotedness to his conduct. *Quicken, and deliver me, according to thy word of promise, for I do not forget thy precepts.* The closer we cleave to the word of God, both as our rule, and as our stay, the more assurance we may have of deliverance in due time.

155. Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes.

Here is, 1. The description of wicked men; they do not only not do God's statutes, but they do not so much as seek them; they do not acquaint themselves with them, nor so much as desire to know their duty, or in the least endeavour to do it. These are wicked indeed, that do not think the law of God worth enquiring after, but are altogether regardless of it, being resolved to live at large, and to walk in the way of their heart.

2. The

2. Their doom. *Salvation is far from them.* They cannot upon any good grounds, promise themselves temporal deliverance; *Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.* How can they expect to seek God's favour with success, when they are in adversity, that never fought his statutes when they were in prosperity? But eternal salvation is certainly far from them. They flatter themselves with a conceit that it is near, and they are going to heaven; but they are mistaken, it is far from them, they thrust it from them, by thrusting the Saviour from them; it is so far from them, that they cannot reach it, and the longer they persist in sin, the farther it is; nay, while salvation is far from them, damnation is near; it flumbers not: *Behold the judge stands before the door.*

156. Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to thy judgments.

Here, 1. David admires God's grace. *Great are thy tender mercies, O Lord.* The goodness of God's nature, as it is his glory, so it is the joy of all the saints; his mercies are tender, for he is full of compassion; they are many, they are great, it is a fountain that can never be exhausted; he is rich in mercy to all that call upon him. He had spoken of the misery of the wicked, *ver. 155.* but God is good for all that; there were tender mercies sufficient in God to have saved them, if they had not *despised the riches of those mercies.* They that are delivered from the sinner's doom, are bound for ever to own the greatness of God's mercies which delivered them.

2. He begs for God's grace, reviving quickning grace, *according to his judgments,* i. e. according to the tenor of the new covenant, that established rule by which he goes in dispensing that grace. Or according to his manner, his custom or usage, with those that love his name, *ver. 132.*

157. Many are my persecutors, and mine enemies: yet do I not decline from thy testimonies.

Here is, 1. David surrounded with difficulties and dangers. *Many are my persecutors and mine enemies.* When Saul, the king, was his persecutor and enemy, no marvel that many more were so; multitudes will follow the pernicious ways of abused authority. David being a publick person, had many enemies, but, withal, he had many friends that loved him and wished him well, let him set the one over against the other. In this David was a type both of Christ and his church. The enemies, the persecutors of both are many, very many.

2. David established in the way of his duty notwithstanding. *Yet do I not decline from thy testimonies,* as knowing that while I stick to them, God is for me; and then no matter who is against me. A man that is steady in the way of his duty, though he may have many enemies, needs fear none.

158. I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved: because they kept not thy word.

Here is, (1.) David's sorrow for the wickedness of the wicked. Though he conversed much at home, yet sometimes he looked abroad, and could not but see the wicked walking on every side. He *beheld the transgressors,* those whose sins were open before all men, and it grieved him to see them dishonour God, serve Satan, debauch the world, and ruin their own souls; to see the transgressors so numerous, so daring, so very impudent, and so industrious to draw unstable souls into their snares. All this cannot but be a grief to those that have any regard to the glory of God, and the welfare of mankind.

(2.) The reason of that sorrow. He was grieved, not because they were vexatious to him, but because they were provoking to God; *They kept not thy word.* They that hate sin truly, hate it as sin, as a transgression of the law of God, and a violation of his word.

159. Consider how I love thy precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to thy loving kindness.

Here is, 1. David's appeal to God concerning his love to his precepts. Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love them; consider it then, and deal with me as thou usest to deal with those that love thy word, which thou hast magnified above all thy name. He doth not say, consider how I fulfil thy precepts, he was conscious to himself, that in many things he came short, but consider how I love them: And our obedience is then only pleasing to God, and pleasant to ourselves, when it comes from a principle of love.

2. His petition thereupon; quicken me, to do my duty with vigour; revive me, keep me alive; not according to any merit of mine, though I love thy word, *but according to thy loving kindness;* it is to that we owe our lives, nay, that is better than life itself. We need not desire to be quickened, any further than God's *loving kindness* will quicken us.

160. Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.

David here comforts himself with the faithfulness of God's word, for the encouragement of himself and others to rely upon it.

1. It has always been found faithful hitherto, and never failed any that ventured upon it. *It is true from the beginning.* Ever since God began to reveal himself to the children of men, all he said was true, and to be trusted. The church from its beginning was built upon this rock. It has not gained its validity by tract of time, as many governments, whose best plea is prescription and long usage, (*Quod initio non valet tractu temporis convalescit*). But the *beginning of God's word was true,* so some read it; his government was laid on a sure foundation. And all, in every age, that have received God's word in faith and love, have found every saying in it *faithful and well worthy of all acceptance.*

2. It will be found faithful to the end, because righteous; every one of thy judgments endureth for ever unalterable, and of perpetual obligation, and reading mens everlasting doom.

21. SCHIN.

161. Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word.

David here lets us know,

1. How he was discouraged in his duty by the fear of man: *Princes persecuted him.* They looked upon him as a traitor and an enemy to the government, and under that notion fought his life, and bid him *go serve other Gods,* 1 Sam. xxvi. 19. It hath been the common lot of the best men to be persecuted; and the case is the worse, if princes be the persecutors, for they have not only the sword in their hand, and therefore can do the more hurt, but they have the law on their side, and can do it with reputation and colour of justice. It is sad, that the power which magistrates have from God, and should use for him, should ever be employed against him. But *marvel not at the matter,* Eccl. v. 8. It was a comfort to David, that when princes persecuted him, he could truly say it was without cause, he never gave them any provocation.

2. How he was kept to his duty, notwithstanding, by the fear of God. They would make me stand in awe of them and their word, and do as they bid me; but *my heart stands in awe of thy word,* and I was resolved to please God, and keep in with him, whoever is displeased, and falls out with me. Every gracious soul *stands in awe* of the word of God, of the authority of its precepts, and the terror of its threatnings; and to those that do so, nothing appears in the power and wrath of man at all formidable. We ought to obey God rather than men, and to make sure of God's favour, though we throw our selves under the frowns of all the world, *Luke xii. 4, 5.* The heart that *stands in awe of God's word,* is armed against the temptations that arise from persecution.

162. I rejoyce at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.

Here is, 1. The pleasure David took in the word of God. He rejoiced at it, rejoiced that God had made such a discovery of his mind, that Israel was blessed with that light, when other nations sat in darkness; that he was himself let into the understanding of it, and had had experience of the power of it. He took a pleasure in reading it, hearing it, and meditating on it, and every thing he met with in it was agreeable to him. He had just now said, that his heart *stood in awe of his word,* and yet here that he rejoiced in it; the more reverence we have for the word of God, the more joy we shall find in it.

2. The degree of that pleasure, *as one that findeth great spoil.* This supposeth a victory over the enemy. It is through much opposition that a soul comes to this, to *rejoyce in God's word.* But besides the pleasure and honour of a conquest, there is great advantage gained by the plunder of the field, which adds much to the joy. By the word of God we become more than conquerors, that is, unspeakable gainers.

163. I hate and abhor lying: but thy law do I love.

Love and hatred are the leading affections of the soul; if those be fixed right, the rest move accordingly. Here we have them fixed right in David.

1. He had a rooted antipathy to sin, he could not endure to think of it; *I hate and abhor lying;* which may be taken for all sin, inasmuch as by it we deal treacherously and perfidiously with God, and put a cheat upon ourselves. Hypocrisy is lying; false doctrine is lying; breach of faith is lying. Lying in commerce or conversation is a sin, which every good man hates and abhors, hates and double hates, because of the seven things which the Lord hates, *one is a lying tongue,* and *another is a false witness that speaketh lies,* Prov. vi. 16. Every man hates to have a lie told

told him; but we should more hate telling a lie, because by the former we only receive an affront from men, by the latter we give an affront to God.

2. He had a rooted affection to the word of God. *Thy law do I love.* And therefore he *abhorred lying*, for lying is contrary to the whole law of God; and the reason why he loved the law of God, was because of the truth of it. The more we see of the amiable beauty of truth, the more we shall see of the detestable deformity of a lie.

164. Seven times a day do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments.

David in this psalm is full of complaints, yet those did neither juggle out his praises, nor put him out of tune for them; whatever condition a child of God is in, he doth not want matter for praise, and therefore should not want a heart. See here,

1. How often David praised God. *Seven times a day*, i. e. very frequently; not only every day, but often every day. Many think once a week will serve, or once or twice a day, but David would praise God *seven times a day* at least. Praising God is a duty which we should very much abound in.

We must praise God at every meal, praise him upon all occasions, in every thing give thanks. We should praise God *seven times a day*, for the subject can never be exhausted, and our affections should never be tired. See *ver. 62*.

2. What he praised God for; *because of thy righteous judgments.* We must praise God for his precepts, which are all just and good, for his promises and threatnings, and the performance of both in his providence. We are to praise God even for our afflictions, if through grace we get good by them.

165. Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

Here is an account of the happiness of good men, that are governed by a principle of love to the word of God, that make it their rule, and are ruled by it.

1. They are easy, and have a holy serenity; none enjoy themselves more than they do. *Great peace have they that love thy law*, abundant satisfaction in doing their duty, and pleasure in reflection upon it. *The work of righteousness is peace*, Isa. xxxii. 17. such peace as the world can neither give nor take away. They may be in great troubles without, and yet enjoy great peace within; *sat lucis intus*. They that love the world have great vexation, for it doth not answer their expectations; they that love God's word have great peace, for it outdoes their expectation, and in it they have sure footing.

2. They are safe, and have a holy security; *nothing shall offend them*; nothing shall be a scandal, snare, or stumbling-block to them, to entangle them either in guilt or grief. No event of providence shall be either an invincible temptation or an intolerable affliction to them, but their love to the word of God shall enable them, both to hold fast their integrity, and preserve their tranquillity. They will make the best of that which is, and not quarrel with any thing that God doth. *Nothing shall offend or hurt them*, for every thing shall work for good to them, and therefore shall please them, and they reconcile themselves to it. They, in whom this holy love reigns, will not be apt to perplex themselves with needless scruples, nor to take offence at their brethren, 1 Cor. xiii. 6, 7.

166. LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.

Here is the whole duty of man; for we are taught,

1. To keep our eye upon God's favour as our end: *Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation*, not only temporal, but eternal salvation. I have hope for that as my happiness, and laid up my treasure in it; I have hoped for it as thine, as a happiness of thy preparing, thy promising, and which consists in being with thee. Hope of this has raised me above the world, and born me up under all my burthens in it.

2. To keep our eye upon God's word as our rule. *I have done thy commandments*, i. e. I have made conscience of conforming my self to thy will in every thing. Observe here how God has joined these two together, and let no man put them asunder. We cannot upon good grounds hope for God's salvation, unless we set ourselves to do his commandments, Rev. xxii. 14. But those that sincerely endeavour to do his commandments, ought to keep up a good hope of the salvation; and that hope will both engage and enlarge the heart in doing the commandments. The more lively the hope is, the more lively the obedience will be.

167. My soul hath kept thy testimonies: and I love them exceedingly. 168. I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies: for all my ways are before thee.

David's conscience here witnesseth for him,

1. That his practices were good. (1.) He loved God's testimonies, he loved them exceedingly. Our love to the word of

God must be a superlative love, we must love it better than the wealth and pleasure of this world: And it must be a victorious love, such as will subdue and mortify our lusts, and extirpate carnal affections. (2.) He kept them, his soul kept them; bodily exercise profits little in religion, we must make heart-work of it, or make nothing of it. The soul must be sanctified and renewed, and delivered into the mould of the word; the soul must be employed in glorifying God, for he will be worshipped in the spirit. We must keep both the precepts and the testimonies, the commands of God by our obedience to them, and his promises by our reliance on them.

2. That he was governed herein by a good principle; therefore I have kept thy precepts, because by faith I have seen thine eyes always upon me, *all my ways are before thee*; thou knowest every step I take, and strictly observe all I say and do. Thou dost see, and accept all that I say and do well; thou dost see, and art displeased with all I say and do amiss. Note, The consideration of this, that God's eye is upon us at all times, should make us very careful in every thing to keep his commandments, Gen. xvii. 1.

22. T A U.

169. Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD: give me understanding according to thy word. 170. Let my supplication come before thee: deliver me according to thy word.

Here is, 1. A general petition for audience repeated; *Let my cry come near before thee*, and again, *let my supplication come before thee*. He calls his prayer his cry, which notes the fervency and vehemence of it, and his supplication, which notes the humility of it; we must come to God, as beggars come to our doors for an alms. He is concerned that his prayer might come before God, might come near before him, i. e. that he might have grace and strength by faith, and fervency to lift up his prayers; that no guilt might interpose to shut out his prayers, and to separate between him and God, and that God would graciously receive his prayers, and take notice of them. His prayer, that his supplication might come before God, implies a deep sense of his unworthiness, and a holy fear that his prayer should come short, or miscarry, as not fit to come before God; nor would any of our prayers have had access to God, if Jesus Christ had not approached to him as an advocate for us, Jer. iii. 4.

2. Two particular requests, which he is thus earnest to present. (1.) That God by his grace would give him wisdom to carry himself well under his troubles. *Give me understanding*, he means that wisdom of the prudent, which is to understand his way; give me to know thee, and myself, and my duty to thee. (2.) That God, by his providence, would rescue him out of his troubles. *Deliver me*, i. e. with the temptation make a way to escape, 1 Cor. x. 13.

3. The same general plea to enforce these requests, *according to thy word*. This directs and limits his desires; Lord, give me such an understanding as thou hast promised, and such a deliverance as thou hast promised, I ask for no other. It also encourageth his faith and expectation; Lord, that which I pray for, is what thou hast promised, and wilt not thou be as good as thy word?

171. My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes.

Here is, 1. A great favour which David expects from God, that he will teach him *his statutes*. This he had often prayed for in this psalm, and urged his petition for it with various arguments; and now he is drawing towards the close of the psalm, he speaks of it as taken for granted. They that are humbly earnest with God for his grace, and resolve with Jacob, they will not let him go unless he bless them with spiritual blessings, may be humbly confident, that they shall at length obtain what they are so importunate for. The God of Israel will grant them those things, which they request of him.

2. The grateful sense he promiseth to have of that favour; *My lips shall utter praise when thou hast taught me*. (1.) Then he shall have cause to praise God. Those that are taught of God have a great deal of reason to be thankful, for this is the foundation of all these spiritual blessings which are the best blessings, and the earnest of eternal blessings. (2.) Then he shall know how to praise God, and have a heart to it. All that are taught of God, are taught this lesson; when God opens the understanding, opens the heart, and so opens the lips, it is that the mouth may shew forth his praise. We have learned nothing to purpose, if we have not learned to praise God. (3.) Therefore he is thus importunate for divine instructions, that he might praise God. They that pray for God's grace, must aim at God's glory, Eph. i. 12.

172. My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness.

Observe

Observe here, (1.) The good knowledge David had of the word of God; he knew it so well, that he was ready to own with the utmost satisfaction, that all God's commandments are not only righteous, but righteousness itself, the rule and standard of righteousness. (2.) The good use he resolved to make of that knowledge; *My tongue shall speak of thy word*: Not only utter praise for it to the glory of God, but discourse of it for the instruction and edification of others; as that which he was himself full of; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak; and as that which he desired others also might be filled with. The more we see of the righteousness of God's commandments, the more industrious we should be to bring others acquainted with them, that they may be ruled by them. We should always make the word of God the governour of our discourse, so as never to transgress it by sinful speaking or sinful silence; and we should often make it the subject matter of our discourse, that it may feed many, and minister grace to the hearers.

173. Let thine hand help me: for I have chosen thy precepts. 174. I have longed for thy salvation; O LORD: and thy law is my delight.

Here, 1. David prays, that divine grace would work for him; *Let thine hand help me*. He finds his own hands are not sufficient for him, nor can any creature lend him a helping hand to any purpose; therefore he looks up to God in hopes that the hand that had made him, would help him; for if the Lord do not help us, whence can any creature help us? All our help must be expected from God's hand, from his power, and his bounty.

2. He pleads what divine grace had already wrought in him, as a pledge of farther mercy, being a qualification for it. Three things he pleads:

1. That he had made religion his serious and deliberate choice; *I have chosen thy precepts*. I took them for my rule, not because I knew no other, but because upon trial I knew no better. Those are good, and do good indeed, who are good and do good not by chance, but of choice; and those who have thus chosen God's precepts, may depend upon God's helping hand in all their services, and under all their sufferings.

2. That his heart was upon heaven; *I have longed for thy salvation*, David, when he was got to the throne, met with enough in the world to court his stay, and to make him say, it is good to be here; but still he was looking further, and longing for something better in another world. There is an eternal salvation which all the saints are longing for, and therefore pray that God's hand would help them forwards in their way to it.

3. That he took pleasure in doing his duty; *Thy law is my delight*. Not only I delight in it, but it is my delight, the greatest delight I have in this world. Those that are cheerful in their obedience, may in faith beg help of God to carry them on in their obedience: And those that expect God's salvation, must take delight in his law, and their hopes must increase their delight.

175. Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee: and let thy judgments help me.

David's heart is still upon praising God; and therefore, 1. He prays that God would give him time to praise him. *Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee*, i. e. let my life be prolonged that I may live to thy glory. The reason why a good man desires to live, is, that he may praise God in the land of the living, and do something to his honour. Not, let me live and serve my country, live and provide for my family; but let me live, that in doing this I may praise God here in this world of conflict and opposition. When we die, we hope to go to a better world to praise him; and that is more agreeable for us, but here there is more need of us. And therefore one would not desire to live any longer than we may do God some service here. *Let my soul live*, i. e. Let me be sanctified and comforted, these are the life of the soul, and then it shall praise thee. Our souls must be employed in praising God, and therefore we must pray for grace and peace, that we may be fitted to praise God.

2. He prays that God would give him strength to praise him; *Let thy judgments help me*, i. e. let all ordinances, and all providences (both are God's judgments) further me in glorifying God; let them be the matter of my praise, and let them help to fit me for that work.

176. I have gone astray like a lost sheep, seek thy servant: for I do not forget thy commandments.

Here is, 1. A penitent confession; *I have gone astray*, or wandered up and down like a lost sheep. As unconverted sinners are like lost sheep, Luke xv. 4. so weak unsteady saints are like lost sheep, Matth. xviii. 12, 13. We are apt to wander like the sheep, and very unapt when we have gone astray to find the way again. By going astray we lose the comfort of the green pastures, and expose ourselves to a thousand mischiefs.

2. A believing petition; *seek thy servant*, as the good shepherd seeks a wandering sheep to bring it back again, Ezek. xxxiv. 12.

Lord, seek me, as I used to seek my sheep when they went astray; for David had been himself a tender shepherd. Lord, own me for one of thine, for though I am a stray sheep, I have thy mark; concern thy self for me, send after me by the word, and conscience, and providences; bring me back by thy grace. *Seek me*, that is, *find me*; for God never seeks in vain. *Turn me, and I shall be turned*.

3. An obedient plea; though I have gone astray, yet I have not wickedly departed, *I do not forget thy commandments*. Thus he concludes the psalm with a penitent sense of his own sin; and a believing dependence on God's grace. With these a devout christian will conclude his duties, will conclude his life; he will live and die repenting and praying. Observe here, (1.) It is the character of good people; that they do not forget God's commandments, being well pleased with their convictions, and well settled in their resolutions. (2.) Even those who, through grace, are mindful of their duty, yet cannot but own, that they have in many instances wandered from it. (3.) Those that have wandered from their duty, yet if they continue mindful of it, may with an humble confidence commit themselves to the care of God's grace.

PSALM CXX.

This psalm is the first of those fifteen, which are here put together under the title of songs of degrees: It is well it is not material, what the meaning of that title should be, for nothing is offered towards the explication of it, no, not by the Jewish writers themselves, but what is conjectural. These psalms do not seem to be composed all by the same hand, much less all at the same time. Four of them are expressly ascribed to David, and one said to be designed for Solomon, and perhaps penned by him; yet Psalm cxxvi. and cxxix., seem to be of a much later date; some of them are calculated for the closet, as Psalm cxx. cxxx. some for the family, as Psalm cxxvii. cxxviii. some for the publick assembly, as Psalm cxxii. cxxxiv. and some occasional, as Psalm cxxiv. cxxxii. So that it should seem they had not this title from the author, but from the publisher. Some conjecture, that they are so called from their singular excellency; as the song of songs, so the song of degrees, is a most excellent song, in the highest degree. Others, from the tune they were set to, or the musical instruments they were sung to, or the raising of the voice in singing of them: Some think they were sung on the fifteen steps or stairs, by which they went up from the outward court of the temple to the inner; others, at so many stages of the peoples journey, when they returned out of captivity. I shall only observe, 1. That they are all short psalms, all but one very short, three of them have but three verses apiece, and that they are placed next to Psalm cxix. which is by much the longest of all: Now as that was one psalm divided into many parts, so these were many psalms, which, being short, were sometimes sung all together, and made as it were one psalm, observing only a pause between each; as many steps make one pair of stairs. 2. That in the composition of them we frequently meet with the figure they call climax, or an ascent; the preceding word repeated, and then rising to something further, as Psalm cxx. With him that hated peace, I peace. Psalm cxxi. From whence cometh my help, my help cometh. He that keepeth thee shall not slumber, he that keepeth Israel. Psalm cxxii. Within thy gates, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem is builded. Psalm cxxiii. Until that he have mercy upon us, Have mercy upon us. And the like in most of them, if not all. Perhaps, for one of these reasons, they are called songs of degrees.

This psalm is supposed to have been penned by David upon occasion of Doeg's accusing him and the priests to Saul, because it is like Psalm lii. which was penned on that occasion; and because the psalmist complains of his being driven out of the congregation of the Lord, and his being forced among barbarous people. 1. He prays to God to deliver him from the mischiefs designed him by false and malicious tongues, ver. 1, 2. 2. He threatens the judgments of God against such, ver. 3, 4. 3. He complains of his ill neighbours that were quarrelsome and vexatious, ver. 5.—7. In singing this psalm we may comfort ourselves in reference to the scourge of the tongue, when at any time we fall unjustly under the lash of it, that better than we have smarted for it.

¶ A song of degrees.

1. **I**N my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me. 2. Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue. 3. What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? 4. Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper.

Here is, 1. Deliverance from a false tongue obtained by prayer; David records his own experience of this.

(1.) He was brought into distress, into great distress, by lying lips, and a deceitful tongue. There were those that sought his ruin, and had almost effected it by lying. 1. By telling lies to him:

They flattered him with professions and protestations of friendship, and promises of kindness and service to him, that they might the more securely and without suspicion carry on their designs against him, and might have an opportunity, by betraying his counsils, to do him a mischief. They smiled in his face and kissed him, then when they were aiming to smite him under the fifth rib. The most dangerous enemies, and those which it is most hard to guard against, are such as carry on their malicious designs under colour of friendship. The Lord deliver every good man from such lying lips. 2. By telling lies of him; they forged false accusations against him, and laid to his charge things that he knew not.

This has often been the lot not only of the innocent, but of the excellent ones of the earth, who have been greatly distressed by lying lips, and have not only had their names blackened and made odious by calumnies in conversation, but their lives and all that is dear to them in this world endangered by false witness-bearing in judgment. David was herein a type of Christ, who was distressed by lying lips, and deceitful tongues.

(2.) In this distress he had recourse to God by faithful and fervent prayer; *I cried unto the Lord*. Having no fence against false tongues, he appealed to him who has all mens hearts in his hand, who has power over the consciences of bad men, and can when he pleaseth bridle their tongues. His prayer was, *Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips*, that my enemies may not by these cursed methods work my ruin. He that had prayed so earnestly to be kept from lying, *Psal. cxix. 29.* and hated it so heartily in himself, *ver. 163.* might with the more confidence pray to be kept from being belied by others, and from the ill consequences of it.

(3.) He obtained a gracious answer to this prayer; God heard him; so that his enemies, though they carried their designs very far, were baffled at last, and could not prevail to do him the mischief they intended. The God of truth is, and will be the protector of his people from lying lips, *Psal. xxxvii. 6.*

2. The doom of a false tongue foretold by faith, *ver. 3, 4.* As God will preserve his people from this mischievous generation, so he will reckon with their enemies, *Psal. xii. 3, 7.* The threatening is addressed to the sinner himself, for the awakening his conscience, if he have any left: Consider *what shall be given unto thee, and what shall be done unto thee*, by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, *thou false tongue*. Surely sinners durst not do as they do, if they knew, and would be persuaded to think, what will be in the end thereof. Let liars consider what shall be given to them; *Sharp arrows of the Almighty, with coals of juniper*, i. e. they will fall and lie for ever under the wrath of God, and will be made miserable by the tokens of his displeasure, which will fly swiftly like arrows, and will strike the sinner ere he is aware, and when he sees not who hurts him. This is threatened against liars, *Psal. lxxiv. 7. God shall shoot at them with an arrow, suddenly shall they be wounded.* They set God at a distance from them, but from afar his arrows can reach them. They are *sharp arrows*, and *arrows of the mighty*, the Almighty; for they will pierce through the strongest armour, and strike deep into the hardest heart. The terrors of the Lord are his arrows, *Job vi. 4.* and his wrath is compared to burning *coals of juniper*, which do not flame or crackle like thorns under a pot, but have a vehement heat, and keep fire very long; some say, a year round, even when they seem to be gone out. This is the portion of the false tongue; for all that love and make a lie, shall have their portion in the lake that burns eternally, *Rev. xxii. 15.*

5. Wo is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, *that I dwell in the tents of Kedar.* 6. My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace. 7. *I am for peace*: but when I speak, they are for war.

The psalmist here complains of the bad neighbourhood into which he was driven; and some apply the two foregoing verses to this; What shall the deceitful tongue give, what shall it do to those that lie open to it? What shall a man get by living among such malicious, deceitful men? Nothing but *sharp arrows*, and *coals of juniper*, i. e. all the mischiefs of a false and spiteful tongue, *Psal. lvii. 4.* *Wo is me*, saith David, that I am forced to dwell among such, *that I sojourn in Mesech and Kedar.* Not that David dwelt in the country of Mesech or Kedar; we never find him so far off from his own native country; but he dwelt among rude and barbarous people, like the inhabitants of Mesech and Kedar: as when we would describe an ill neighbourhood, we say, *We dwell among Turks and heathens*: this made him cry out, *Wo is me!*

1. He was forced to live at a distance from the ordinances of God: While he was in banishment, he looked upon himself as a sojourner, never at home but when he was near God's altars; and he cries out, *Wo is me*, that my sojourning is prolonged! that I cannot get home to my resting-place, but am still kept at a distance, so some read it. Note, A good man cannot think himself at home while he is banished from God's ordinances, and has not them within reach. And it is a great grief to all that love God, to want the means of grace, and of communion with God: when they are under a force of that kind, they cannot but cry out; as David here, *Wo is me!*

2. He was forced to live among wicked people, who were, upon many accounts, troublesome to him. He *dwelt in the tents of Kedar*, where the shepherds were, probably, in an ill name for being litigious, like the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot. It is a very grievous burthen to a good man to be cast into, and kept in the company of those whom he hopes to be for ever separated from; like Lot in Sodom, *2 Pet. ii. 8.* and to dwell long with such is grievous indeed, for they are thorns, vexing and scratching, and tearing, and that will shew the old enmity that is in the *seed of the serpent*, against the *seed of the woman*. Those that David dwelt with, were such as not only hated him, but hated peace, and proclaimed war with it; who might write on their weapons of war, not *sic sequimur pacem*, but *sic persequimur*. Perhaps, Saul's court was the Mesech and Kedar in which David dwelt, and Saul was the man he means that hated peace, whom David studied to oblige, and could not; but the more service he did him, the more exasperated he was against him.

See here, (1.) The character of a very good man in David, who could truly say, though he were a man of war, *I am for peace*; for living peaceably with all men, and unpeaceably with none. *I peace*, so it is in the original; I love peace, and pursue peace; my disposition is to peace, and my delight is in it: I pray for peace, and strive for peace, will do any thing, submit to any thing, part with any thing, in reason, for peace. *I am for peace*, and have made it to appear that I am so. *The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable.*

(2.) The character of the worst of bad men in David's enemies, who would pick quarrels with those that were most peaceably disposed. *When I speak, they are for war*; and the more forward for war, the more they find me inclined to peace. He spoke with all the respect and kindness that could be; proposed methods of accommodation, spoke reason, spoke love, but they would not so much as hear him patiently; but cried out, To arms, to arms; so fierce and implacable were they, and so bent to mischief. Such were Christ's enemies: for his love they were his adversaries, and for his good words, and good works, they stoned him. And if we meet with such enemies, we must not think it strange, nor love peace the less for our seeking it in vain. *Be not overcome of evil, no not of such evil as this, but, even when thus tried, still try to overcome evil with good.*

P S A L M CXXI.

Some call this the soldiers psalm, and think it was penned in the camp, when David was jeoparding his life in the high places of the field, and thus trusted God to cover his head in the day of battle. Others call it the travellers psalm, (for there is nothing in it of military dangers) and think David penned it when he was going abroad, and designed it, pro vehiculo, for a good man's convoy and companion in a journey or voyage. But we need not thus appropriate it; wherever we are, at home or abroad, we are exposed to danger more than we are aware of; and this psalm directs and encourageth us to repose ourselves and our confidence in God, and by faith to put ourselves under his protection, and commit ourselves to his care, which we must do, with an entire resignation and satisfaction. In singing this psalm, 1. David here assures himself of help from God, *ver. 1, 2.* 2. He assures others of it, *ver. 3, 8.*

¶ A song of degrees.

1. **I** Will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. 2. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. 3. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. 4. Behold, he that keepeth Israel, shall neither slumber nor sleep. 5. The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. 6. The sun shall not smite thee by day; nor the moon by night. 7. The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. 8. The LORD shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in, from this time forth and even for evermore.

This psalm teacheth us,

1. To stay ourselves upon God as a God of power, and a God all-sufficient for us. David did so, and found the benefit of it. (1.) We must not rely upon creatures, upon men and means, instruments and second causes; nor make flesh our arm. *Shall I lift up mine eyes to the hills?* so some read it. Doth my help come from thence? shall I depend upon the powers of the earth? upon the strength of the hills; upon princes and great men, that like hills fill the earth, and mount their heads towards heaven? No; *In vain is salvation hoped for from hills and mountains*, *Jer. iii. 23.* I never expect help to come from them, my confidence is in God only. *We must lift up our eyes above the hills*, so some read it; we must look beyond instruments to God, who makes them that to us that they are. (2.) We must see all our help laid up in God, in his power and goodness, his providence and grace; and from him we must expect it to come. *My help comes from the Lord*; the

the help I desire is what he sends, and from him I expect it in his own way and time : If he do not help, no creature can help ; if he do, no creature can hinder, can hurt. (3.) We must fetch in help from God, by faith in his promises, and a due regard to all his institutions. *I will lift up mine eyes to the hills*, probably, he means the hills on which the temple was built, mount Moriah, and the holy hill of Sion, where the ark of the covenant is, the oracle, and the altars : I will have an eye to the special presence of God in his church, and with his people, his presence by promise, and not only to his common presence. When he was at a distance he would look towards the sanctuary, *Psaln xxviii. 2. xlii. 6. from thence cometh our help*, from the word and prayer, from the secret of his tabernacle. *My help cometh from the Lord*, so the word is, *ver. 2. from before the Lord*, or *from the sight and presence of the Lord*. “Which (saith Dr. Hammond) may refer to “Christ incarnate, with whose humanity the deity being inseparably united, God is always present with him, and through him “with us, for whom, sitting at God’s right hand, he constantly “maketh intercession.” Christ is called the *angel of his presence*, that saved his people, *Isa. lxiii. 9.* (4.) We must encourage our confidence in God with this, that he *made heaven and earth*, and he that did that can do any thing. He made the world out of nothing, himself alone, by a word’s speaking, in a little time, and *all very good*, very excellent and beautiful ; and therefore how great soever our streights and difficulties are, he has power sufficient for our succour and relief. He that made heaven and earth is sovereign Lord of all the hosts of both, and can make use of them as he pleaseth for the help of his people, and restrain them when he pleaseth from hurting his people.

2. To comfort ourselves in God, when our difficulties and dangers are greatest. It is here promised, that if we put our trust in God, and keep in the way of our duty, we shall be safe under his protection, so that no real evil, no only evil, shall happen to us, nor any affliction, but what God sees good for us, and will do us good by.

(1.) God himself hath undertaken to be our protector. *The Lord is thy keeper*, *ver. 5.* Whatever charge he gives his angels to keep his people, he has not thereby discharged himself, so that whether every particular saint has an angel for his guardian or no, we are sure he has God himself for his guardian. It is infinite wisdom that contrives, and infinite power that works the safety of those that have put themselves under God’s protection. These must needs be well kept that have *the Lord* for their *keeper* : If, by affliction, they be made his prisoners, yet still he is their keeper.

(2.) The same that is the protector of the church in general, is engaged for the preservation of every particular believer ; the same wisdom, the same power, the same promises. *He that keepeth Israel*, *ver. 4. is thy keeper*, *ver. 5.* The shepherd of the flock is the shepherd of every sheep, and will take care, that not one, even of the little ones, shall perish.

(3.) He is a wakeful, watchful keeper. *He that keepeth Israel*, that keepeth thee, O Israelite, *shall neither slumber nor sleep* ; he never did, nor ever will, for he is never weary : he doth not only not sleep, but he doth not so much as slumber ; he has not the least inclination to sleep.

(4.) He doth not only protect those whom he is the keeper of, but he refresheth them. *He is their shield*. The comparison has a great deal of gracious condescension in it ; the eternal Being that is infinite substance, is what he is ; that he may speak sensible comfort to his people, promiseth to be their umbra, their shadow, to keep as close to them as the shadow doth to the body, and to shelter them from the scorching heat, as *the shadow of a great rock in a weary land*, *Isa. xxxii. 2.* Under this shadow they may sit with delight and assurance, *Cant. ii. 3.*

(5.) He is always near to his people for their protection and refreshment, and never at a distance ; he is their *keeper*, and *shade on their right hand* ; so that he is never far to seek. The right hand is the working hand ; let them but turn themselves dexterously to their duty, and they shall find God ready to them, to assist them, and succeed them, *Psaln xvi. 8.*

(6.) He is not only at their right hand, but he will also *keep the feet of his saints*, *1 Sam. ii. 9.* He will have an eye upon them in their motions ; *he will not suffer thy foot to be moved* : God will provide that his people shall not be tempted above what they are able, shall not fall into sin, though they may be very near it, *Psaln lxxiii. 2, 23.* shall not fall into trouble, though there be many endeavouring to undermine them by fraud, or overthrow them by force : He will keep them from being frightened, as we are when we slip or stumble, and are ready to fall.

(7.) He will protect them from all the malignant influences of the heavenly bodies, *ver. 6.* *The sun shall not smite thee*, with his heat, *by day*, nor *the moon*, with her cold and moisture, *by night*. The sun and moon are great blessings to mankind, and yet (such a sad change has sin made in the creation) even the sun and moon (though worshipped by a great part of mankind) are often instruments of hurt and distemper to human bodies ; God by them often smites us ; but his favour shall interpose so, that they shall not damage his people. He will keep them *night and day*, *Isa. xxvii. 3.* as he kept Israel in the wilderness, by *a pillar of cloud by day*, which screened them from the heat of the sun, and *of fire by night*, which,

probably, diffused a gentle warmth over the whole camp, that they might not be prejudiced by the cold and damp of the night ; their father Jacob having complained, *Gen. xxxi. 40.* that *by day the drought consumed him, and the frost by night*. It may be understood figuratively ; thou shalt not be hurt either by the open assaults of thine enemies, which are as visible as the scorching beams of the sun ; or by their secret, treacherous attempts, which are like the insensible insinuations of the cold by night.

(8.) His protection will make them safe in every respect. *The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil*, the evil of sin, and the evil of trouble. He shall prevent the evil thou fearest, and shall sanctify, remove or lighten, the evil thou seekest. He will keep thee from *doing evil*, *2 Cor. xiii. 7.* and so far from suffering evil, as that whatever affliction happens to thee, there shall be no evil in it. Even that which kills shall not hurt.

(9.) It is the spiritual life, especially, that God will take under his protection. *He shall preserve thy soul*. All souls are his ; and the soul is the man, and therefore he will with a peculiar care preserve them that they be not defiled by sin, and disturbed by affliction. He will keep them by keeping us in the possession of them ; and he will preserve them from perishing eternally.

(10.) He will keep us in all our ways. *He shall preserve thy going out and coming in*. Thou shalt be under his protection in all thy journies and voyages outward-bound, or homeward-bound, as he keeps Israel in the wilderness, in their removes and rests. He will prosper thee in all thy affairs at home and abroad, in the beginning and in the conclusion of them. He will keep thee in life and death, thy going out and going on, while thou livest, and thy coming in when thou diest : going out to thy labour in the morning of thy days, and coming home to thy rest, when the evening of old age calls thee in, *Psaln civ. 20.*

(11.) He will continue his care over us, *from this time forth and even for evermore*. It is a protection for life, never out of date. He will be thy guide *even unto death*, and will then hide thee in the grave, hide thee in heaven. He will *preserve thee in his heavenly kingdom*. God will protect his church, and his saints always, *even to the end of the world*. The Spirit, which is their preserver and comforter, shall abide with them for ever.

P S A L M CXXII.

This psalm seems to have been penned by David for the use of the people of Israel, when they came up to Jerusalem to worship at the three solemn feasts. It was in David’s time that Jerusalem was first chosen to be the city where God would record his name. It being a new thing, this, among other means, was used to bring the people to be in love with Jerusalem, as the holy city, though it was but the other day in the hands of the Jebusites. Observe, 1. The joy with which they were to go up to Jerusalem, ver. 1, 2. 2. The great esteem they were to have of Jerusalem, ver. 3,—5. 3. The great concern they were to have for Jerusalem, and the prayers they were to put up for its welfare, ver. 6,—9. In singing this psalm we must have an eye to the Gospel church, which is called the Jerusalem that is from above.

¶ A song of degrees of David.

1. **I** Was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD. 2. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. 3. Jerusalem is builded as a city, that is compact together : 4. Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD. 5. For there are set thrones of judgment : the thrones of the house of David.

Here is, 1. The pleasure which David, and other pious Israelites, took in approaching to, and attending upon God in publick ordinances, *ver. 1, 2.*

(1.) The invitation to them was very welcome. David was himself glad, and would have every Israelite to say that he *was glad*, when he was called upon to *go up to the house of the Lord*. Note, 1. It is the will of God that we should worship him in comfort ; that many should join together to wait upon him in publick ordinances. We ought to worship God in our own houses, but that is not enough, we must *go into the house of the Lord*, to pay our homage to him there, and *not forsake the assembling ourselves together*. 2. We should not only agree with one another, but excite and stir up one another to go to worship God in publick. *Let us go* ; not do you go and pray for us, and we will stay at home, but *we will go also*, *Zech. viii. 21.* not do you go before, and we will follow at our leisure ; or we will go first, and you shall come after us ; but *let us go together* for the honour of God, and for our mutual edification and encouragement. We ourselves are slow and backward, and others are so too, and therefore we should thus quicken and sharpen one another to that which is good, as iron sharpens iron. 3. They that rejoice in God, will rejoice in calls and opportunities to wait upon him. David himself, though he had as little need of a spur to his zeal in religious exercises as any, yet was so far from taking it as an affront, that he was glad of it as
a kind-

a kindness, when he was called upon to go up to the house of the Lord, with the meanest of his subjects. We should desire our Christian friends, when they have any good work in hand, to call for us, and take us along with them.

(2.) The prospect of them was very pleasing. They speak it with a holy triumph, *ver. 2. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.* They that came out of the country, when they found the journey tedious, comforted themselves with this, that they should be in Jerusalem shortly, and that would make amends for all the fatigues of their travel. We shall stand there as servants; it is desirable to have a place in Jerusalem, though it be among those that stand by, *Zech. iii. 7.* though it be the door-keeper's place, *Psal. lxxxiv. 10.* We have now got a resting-place for the ark, and where it is there will we be.

2. The praises of Jerusalem, as *Psal. xlviii. 12.*

(1.) It is the beautiful city, not only for situation, but for building: It is built into a city, the houses not scattered, but contiguous, and the streets fair and spacious. It is built uniform, compact together, the houses strengthening and supporting one another. Though the city was divided into the higher and lower town, yet, the Jebusites being driven out, and it being entirely in the possession of God's people, it is said to be compact together. It was a type of the Gospel church, which is compact together in holy love and christian communion, so that it is all as one city.

(2.) It is the holy city, *ver. 4.* it is the place where all Israel meet one another: Thither the tribes go up, from all parts of the country, as one man, under the character of the tribes of the Lord, in obedience to his command. It is the place appointed for their general rendezvous; and they come together, 1. To receive instruction from God; they come to the testimony of Israel, to hear what God has to say to them, and to consult his oracle. 2. To ascribe the glory to God; to give thanks to the name of the Lord; which we have all reason to do, especially those that have the testimony of Israel among them. If God speak to us by his word, we have reason to answer him by our thanksgivings. See on what errand we go to publick worship, to give thanks.

(3.) It is the royal city, *ver. 5.* There are set thrones of judgment; therefore the people had reason to be in love with Jerusalem, because justice was administered there by a man after God's own heart. The civil interest of the people were as well secured as their ecclesiastical concerns; and very happy they were in their courts of judicature, which were erected in Jerusalem, as with us in Westminster-hall. Observe, what a goodly sight it was to see the testimony of Israel, and the thrones of judgment, such near neighbours; and they are good neighbours, which may greatly befriended one another: Let the testimony of Israel direct the thrones of judgment, and the thrones of judgment protect the testimony of Israel.

6. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. 7. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. 8. For my brethren and companions sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. 9. Because of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek thy good.

Here, 1. David calls upon others to wish well to Jerusalem, *ver. 6, 7. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem,* i. e. for the welfare of it, for all good to it, particularly, for the uniting of the inhabitants among themselves, and their preservation from the incursions of enemies. This we may truly desire, that in the peace thereof we may have peace; and this we must earnestly pray for, for it is the gift of God, and for it he will be enquired of. Those that can do nothing else for the peace of Jerusalem, can pray for it, which is something more than shewing their good-will, it is the appointed way of fetching in mercy. The peace and welfare of the Gospel church, particularly in our land, is to be earnestly desired and prayed for by every one of us.

Now, (1.) We are here encouraged in our prayers for Jerusalem's peace: *They shall prosper that love thee.* We must pray for Jerusalem, not out of custom, or for fashion's sake, but out of a principle of love to God's government of man, and man's worship of God: And in seeking the publick welfare, we seek our own; for so well doth God love the gates of Zion, that he will love all those that do love them; and therefore they cannot but prosper; at least their soul shall prosper, by the ordinances they so dearly love.

(2.) We are here directed in our prayers for it, and words are put into our mouths, *ver. 7. Peace be within thy walls.* He teacheth us to pray, 1. For all the inhabitants in general; all within the walls, from the least to the greatest. Peace be in thy fortifications, i. e. let them never be attacked; or, if they be, let them never be taken, but be an effectual security to the city. 2. For the princes and rulers especially; let prosperity be in the palaces of the great men that sit at the stern, and have the conduct of publick affairs; for if they prosper, it will be well for the publick. The poorer sort are apt to envy the prosperity of the palaces, but they are here taught to pray for it.

2. He resolves that whatever others do, he will approve himself a faithful friend to Jerusalem; 1. In his prayers, *I will now say,*

now I see the tribes so cheerfully resorting hither to the testimony of Israel, and the matter settled, that Jerusalem must be the place where God will record his name, now I will say, *Peace be within thee.* He did not say, Let others pray for the publick peace, the priests and the prophets, whose business it is; and the people, that have nothing else to do, and I will fight for it, and rule for it: No; I will pray for it too. 2. In his endeavours, with which he will second his prayers; *I will,* to the utmost of my power, seek thy good. Whatever lies within the sphere of our activity to do for the publick good, we must do it, else we are not sincere in praying for it.

Now it might be said, No thanks to David to be so solicitous for the welfare of Jerusalem, it was his own city, and the interests of his family were lodged in it. It is true; yet he professeth that was not the reason why he was in such care for the welfare of Jerusalem; but it proceeded from the dear love he had, 1. To the communion of saints: It is for my brethren and companions sakes, i. e. for the sake of all true hearted Israelites, whom I look upon as my brethren, (so he calls them, *1 Chron. xxviii. 2.*) and who have oft been my companions in the worship of God, which hath knit my heart to them. 2. To the ordinances of God: He had set his affection to the house of his God, *1 Chron. xxix. 3.* took a great pleasure in publick worship, and for that reason would pray for the good of Jerusalem. Then our concern for the publick welfare is right, when it is the effect of a sincere love to God's institutions and his faithful worshippers.

PSALM CXXIII.

This psalm was penned at a time when the church of God was brought low and trampled upon; some think it was when the Jews were captives in Babylon; though that was not the only time that they were insulted over by the proud. The psalmist begins as if he spoke for himself only, *ver. 1.* but presently speaks in the name of the church. Here is, 1. Their expectation of mercy from God, *ver. 1, 2.* 2. Their plea for mercy with God, *ver. 3, 4.* In singing it we must have our eye up to God's favour with a holy concern; and then an eye down to men's reproach with a holy contempt.

¶ A song of degrees.

Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. 2. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress: so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us. 3. Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt. 4. Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud.

We have here,

1. The solemn profession which God's people make of faith and hope in God, *ver. 1, 2.* Observe,

(1.) The title here given to God; *O thou that dwellest in the heavens:* Our Lord Jesus has taught us in prayer to have an eye to God, as our Father in heaven; not that he is confined there, but there especially he manifests his glory, as the king in his court. Heaven is a place of prospect, and a place of power; he that dwells there, thence beholds all the calamities of his people, and from thence can send to save them. Sometimes God seems to have forsaken the earth, and the enemies of God's people ask, *Where is now your God?* But then they can say with comfort, *Our God is in the heavens. O thou that sittest in the heavens,* so some; sittest as Judge there; for the Lord has prepared his throne in the heavens, and to that throne injured innocency may appeal.

(2.) The regard here had to God; the psalmist himself lifted up his eyes to him: The eyes of a good man are ever towards the Lord, *Psal. xxv. 15.* in every prayer we lift up our soul, the eye of our soul to God; especially in trouble, which was the case here. The eyes of the people waited on the Lord, *ver. 2.* We find mercy coming towards a people, when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, are towards the Lord, *Zech. ix. 1.* The eyes of the body are heaven-ward, *Os homini sublime dedit,* to teach us which way to direct the eyes of the mind. Our eyes wait on the Lord, i. e. the eye of desire and prayer; the begging eye, and the eye of dependence, hope and expectation; the longing eye. Our eyes must wait upon God as the Lord, and our God, until that he have mercy upon us. We desire mercy from him, we hope he will shew us mercy, and we will continue our attendance on him till it doth come.

This is illustrated, *ver. 2.* by a similitude: Our eyes are to God, as the eyes of a servant, or handmaid, to the hand of their master and mistress. The eyes of a servant are, 1. To his master's directing hand, expecting that he will appoint him his work, and cut it out for him, and shew him how he must do it. *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* 2. To his supplying hand; servants look to their master or their mistress for their portion of meat in due

due season, *Prov. xxxi. 15.* And to God must we look for daily bread, for grace sufficient; from him we must receive it thankfully. 3. To his assisting hand: If the servant cannot do his work himself, where must he look for help but to his master? and in the strength of the Lord God, we must go forth and go on. 4. To his protecting hand: If the servant meet with opposition in his work; if he be questioned for what he doth; if he be wronged and injured; who should bear him out, and right him, but his master that set him on work? The people of God, when they are persecuted, may appeal to their Master, *We are thine, save us.* 5. To his correcting hand. If the servant have provoked his master to beat him, he doth not call for help against his master, but looks at the hand that strikes him, till it shall say, It is enough, I will not contend for ever. The people of God were now under his rebukes, and whither should they turn but to him that smote them? *Isa. ix. 13.* to whom should they make supplication but to their Judge? They will not do as Hagar did, that outrun her mistress, when she put some hardship upon her, *Gen. xvi. 6.* but they submit themselves to, and humble themselves under God's mighty hand. 6. To his rewarding hand; the servant expects his wages, his well-done from his master. Hypocrites have their eye to the world's hand, thence they have their reward, *Matt. vi. 2.* but true christians have their eye to God as their rewarder.

2. The humble address which God's people present to him in their calamitous condition, *ver. 3, 4.* wherein,

1. They sue for mercy; not prescribing to God what he shall do for them, not pleading any merit of their own, why he should do for them, but, *Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us.* We find little mercy with men, their tender mercies are cruel, there are cruel mockings, but this is our comfort, that with the Lord there is mercy, and we need desire no more to relieve us, and make us easy, but the mercy of God. Whatever the troubles of the church are, God's mercy is a sovereign remedy.

2. They set forth their grievances: *We are exceedingly filled with contempt.* Reproach is the wound, the burthen they complain of. Observe, 1. Who were reproached; we, who have our eyes up to thee. Those that are owned of God are oftentimes despised and trampled on by the world. Some translate the words which we render, *those that are at ease*, and *the proud*, to signify the persons that are scorned and contempted. Our soul is troubled to see how those that are at peace, and the excellent ones, are scorned and despised. The saints are a peaceable people, and yet are abused, *Psal. xxxv. 20.* the excellent ones of the earth, and yet undervalued, *Lam. iv. 1, 2.* 2. Who did reproach them; taking the words as we read them; they were the epicures that lived at ease, carnal, sensual people, *Job xii. 5.* The scoffers are such as walk after their own lusts, and serve their own bellies: and the proud, that set God himself at defiance, and had a high opinion of themselves, they trampled on God's people, thinking they magnified themselves by vilifying them. 3. To what degree they were reproached. *We are filled*, we are surfeited with it; *Our soul is exceedingly filled with it.* The enemies thought they could never jeer them enough, nor say enough to make them despicable: and they could not but lay it to heart; it was a sword in their bones, *Psal. xlii. 10.* Note, 1. Scorning and contempt has been, and is, and is likely to be, the lot of God's people in this world. Ishmael mocked Isaac, which is called persecuting him; and so it is now, *Gal. iv. 29.* 2. In reference to the scorn and contempt of men, it is matter of comfort that there is mercy with God; mercy to our good names, when they are barbarously used: *Hear, O our God, for we are despised.*

P S A L M CXXIV.

David penned this psalm (we suppose) upon occasion of some great deliverance which God wrought for him and his people from some very threatening danger, which was likely to have involved them all in ruin; whether by foreign invasion, or intestine insurrection, is not certain: whatever it was, he seems to have been himself much affected, and very desirous to affect others, with the goodness of God, in making a way for them to escape: to him he is careful to give all the glory, and takes none to himself, as conquerors use to do. 1. He here magnifies the greatness of the danger they were in, and of the ruin they were at the brink of, *ver. 1, — 5.* 2. He gives God the glory of their escape, *ver. 6, 7.* compared with *ver. 1, 2.* 3. He takes encouragement from thence to trust in God, *ver. 8.* In singing this psalm, besides the application of it to any particular deliverance wrought for us and our people, in our days, and the days of our fathers, we may have in our thoughts the great work of our redemption by Jesus Christ, by which we were rescued from the powers of darkness.

¶ A song of degrees of David.

1. IF it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say: 2. If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us: 3. Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us. 4. Then the wa-

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ters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul. 5. Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.

The people of God being here called upon to praise God for their deliverance, are to take notice,

1. Of the malice of men, by which they were reduced to the very brink of ruin. Let Israel say, that there was but a step between them and death: the more desperate the disease appears to have been, the more doth the skill of the physician appear in the cure.

Observe, (1.) Whence the threatening danger came; *Men rose up against us:* Creatures of our own kind, and yet bent upon our ruin: *Homo homini lupus.* No marvel that the red dragon, the rearing lion, should seek to swallow us up; but that men should thirst after the blood of men, Absalom after the blood of his own father; that a woman should be drunk with the blood of saints, is what, with St. John, we may wonder at with great admiration. From men we may expect humanity, yet there are those whose tender mercies are cruel. But what was the matter with these men? Why, *their wrath was kindled against us*, *ver. 3.* something or other they were angry at, and then no less would serve than the destruction of those they had conceived a displeasure against. *Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous.* Their wrath was kindled as fire, ready to consume us: they were proud; and *the wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor.* They were daring in their attempt, they rose up against us; rose in rebellion, with a resolution to swallow us up alive. (2.) How far it went, and how fatal it had been, if it had gone a little further: we had been devoured, as a lamb by a lion; not only slain, but swallowed up, so that there should have been no relicks of us remaining. Swallowed up with so much haste, ere we were aware, that we should have gone down alive to the pit. We had been deluged as the low grounds by a land-flood, or the sands by a high spring-tide. This similitude he dwells upon, with the ascents, which speak this a song of degrees, or risings, like the rest. *The waters had overwhelmed us:* What of us? Why *the stream had gone over our souls*, our lives, our comforts; all that is dear to us. What waters? Why *the proud waters.* God suffers the enemies of his people sometimes to prevail very far against them, that his own power may appear the more illustrious in their deliverance.

2. Of the goodness of God, by which they were rescued from the very brink of ruin: *The Lord was on our side*, and if he had not been so, we had been undone. 1. God was on our side; he took our part, espoused our cause, and appeared for us: he was our helper, and a very present help, a help on our side, nigh at hand. He was with us; not only for us, but among us, and commander in chief of our forces. 2. That God was Jehovah; there the emphasis lies: If it had not been Jehovah himself, a God of infinite power and perfection, that had undertaken our deliverance, our enemies had overpowered us. Happy the people therefore whose God is Jehovah, a God all-sufficient. Let Israel say this to his honour, and resolve never to forsake him.

6. Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. 7. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we are escaped. 8. Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

Here the psalmist further magnifies the great deliverance God had lately wrought for them.

1. That their hearts might be the more enlarged in thankfulness to him, *ver. 6. Blessed be the Lord.* God is the author of all our deliverances, and therefore he must have the glory of them: We rob him of his due, if we do not return thanks to him. And we are the more obliged to praise him, because we had such a narrow escape. We were delivered, (1.) Like a lamb out of the very jaws of a beast of prey; God hath not given us as a prey to their teeth; intimating, that they had no power against God's people, but what was given them from above. They could not be a prey to their teeth, unless God gave them up, and therefore they were rescued, because God would not suffer them to be ruined. (2.) Like a bird, a little bird, the word signifies a sparrow, out of the snare of the fowler. The enemies are very subtil and spiteful, they lay snares for God's people, to bring them into sin and trouble, and to hold them there. Sometimes they seem to have prevailed so far as to gain their point, they are taken in the snare, and are as unable to help themselves out as any weak and silly bird is; and then is God's time to appear for their relief, when all other friends fail; then God breaks the snare, and turns the counsel of the enemies into foolishness: *The snare is broken, and so we are delivered.* Isaac is saved, when he lay ready to be sacrificed. *Jehovah-jireh, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.*

2. That their hearts, and the hearts of others, might be more encouraged to trust in God in the like dangers, *ver. 8. Our help is in the name of the Lord.* David had directed us, *Psal. cxxi. 2.* to depend upon God for help as to our personal concerns: *My help is in the name of the Lord:* here, as to the concerns of the

publick, *Our help is so.* It is comfort to all that lay the interests of God's Israel near their hearts, that Israel's God is the same that made the world, and therefore will have a church in the world; and can secure that church in the times of the greatest danger and distress: In him therefore let the church's friends put their confidence, and they shall not be put to confusion.

P S A L M CXXV.

This short psalm may be summed up in those words of the prophet, Isa. iii. 10, 11. Say ye to the righteous, It shall be well with him. Wo to the wicked, it shall be ill with him. Thus are life and death, the blessing and the curse, set before us often in the psalms, as well as in the law and the prophets. 1. It is certainly well with the people of God; for, (1.) They have the promises of a good God, that they shall be fixed, ver. 1. and safe, ver. 2. and not always under hatches, ver. 3. (2.) They have the prayers of a good man, which shall be heard for them, ver. 4. 2. It is certainly ill with the wicked, and particularly with the apostates, ver. 5. Some of the Jewish rabbins are of opinion, That it has reference to the days of the Messiah; however, we that are members of the Gospel-church may certainly, in singing this psalm, take the comfort of these promises, and the more, if we stand in awe of the threatening.

¶ A song of degrees.

1. **T**HEY that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. 2. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people, from henceforth even for ever. 3. For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous: lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.

Here are three very precious promises made to the people of God, which, though they are designed to secure the welfare of the church in general, yet may be applied by particular believers to themselves, as other promises of this nature may.

Here is, 1. The character of God's people to whom these promises belong. Many call themselves God's people, who have no part nor lot in this matter: But those shall have the benefit of them, and may take the comfort of them, (1.) Who are righteous, ver. 3. righteous before God, righteous to God, and righteous to all men; for his sake justified and sanctified. (2.) Who trust in the Lord, who depend upon his care, and devote themselves to his honour. All that deal with God, must deal upon trust, and he will give comfort to those only that give credit to him, and make it to appear they do so, by quitting other confidences, and venturing to the utmost for God. The closer our expectations are confined to God, the higher our expectations may be raised from him.

2. The promises themselves.

(1.) That their hearts shall be established by faith: those minds shall be truly stayed, that are stayed on God: *They shall be as mount Zion.* The church in general is called *Mount Zion*, Heb. xii. 18. and it shall in this respect be like *mount Zion*, it shall be built upon a rock, and its interests shall be so well secured, that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* The stability of the church, is the satisfaction of all its well-wishers. Particular persons that trust in God shall be established, *Psalm cxii. 7.* their faith shall be their fixation, *Isa. vii. 9. They shall be as mount Zion,* which is firm as it is a mountain supported by providence, much more as a holy mountain supported by promise. 1. They cannot be removed by the prince of the power of the air, nor by all his subtilty and strength. They cannot be removed from their integrity, nor from their confidence in God. 2. They abide for ever in that grace which is the earnest of their everlasting continuance in glory.

(2.) That committing themselves to God, they shall be safe under his protection from all the insults of their enemies. As Jerusalem had a natural fastness and fortification in the mountains that were round about it, ver. 2. those mountains not only sheltered it from winds and tempests, and broke the force of them, but made it also very difficult of access for an enemy. Such a defence is God's providence to his people! Observe, 1. The compass of it: *The Lord is round about his people* on every side; there is no gap in the hedge of protection, which he makes round about his people, at which the enemy that goes about them, seeking to do them a mischief, can find entrance, *Job i. 10.* 2. The continuance of it; *from henceforth even for ever.* Mountains may moulder and come to nought, and rocks be removed out of their place, *Job xiv. 18.* but God's covenant with his people cannot be broken, *Isa. liv. 10.* nor his care of them cease. Their being said to stand fast for ever, ver. 1. and here to have God round about them for ever, intimates, that the promises of the stability and security of

God's people, will have their full accomplishment in their everlasting state. In heaven they shall stand fast for ever, shall be as pillars in the temple of our God, and go no more out, *Rev. iii. 12.* and there God himself, with his glory and favour, will be round about them for ever.

3. That their troubles shall last no longer than their strength will serve to bear them up under them, ver. 3. 1. It is supposed that the rod of the wicked may come, may fall upon the lot of the righteous. The rod of their power may oppress them, the rod of their anger may vex and torment them. It may light upon their persons, their estates, their liberties, their families, their names, any thing that falls to their lot; only it cannot reach their souls. 2. It is promised, that though it may come upon their lot it shall not rest there, it shall not continue so long as the enemies design, and as the people of God fear, but God will cut the work short in righteousness; so short that even with the temptation he will make a way for them to escape. 3. It is considered as a reason of this promise, that if the trouble should continue over-long, the righteous themselves would be in temptation to put forth their hands to iniquity, i. e. to join with wicked people in their wicked practices; to say as they say, and do as they do. There is danger lest being long persecuted for their religion, at length they grow weary of it, and willing to give it up; being kept long in expectation of promised mercies they begin to distrust the promise, and to think of casting God off upon suspicion of his having cast them off. See *Psalm lxxiii. 13, 14.* Note, God considers the frame of his people, and will proportion their trials to their strength by the power of his grace. Oppression makes a wise man mad, especially if it continue long, therefore for the elects sake the days shall be shortened, that whatever goes with their lot in this world, they may not lose their lot among the chosen.

4. Do good, O LORD, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts. 5. As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel.

Here is, 1. The prayer the psalmist puts up for the happiness of those that are sincere and constant, ver. 4. *Do good, O Lord, unto those that are good.* This teacheth us to pray for all good people, to make supplication for all saints; and we may pray in faith for them, being assured that those who do well shall certainly be well dealt with. They that are as they should be, shall be as they would be; provided they be upright in heart, that they be really as good as they seem to be: *with the upright God will shew himself upright.* He doth not say, *Do good, O Lord, to them that are perfect,* that are sinless and spotless; but to them that are sincere and honest. God's promises should quicken our prayers. It is comfortable wishing well to those for whom God has engaged to do well.

2. The prospect he has of the ruin of hypocrites and deserters, he doth not pray for it, *I have not desired the woful day, thou knowest,* but he predicts it, *As for such,* as having known the way of righteousness, for fear of the rod of the wicked, basely turn aside out of it to their wicked ways, use indirect ways to prevent trouble, or extricate themselves out of it: or, those who, instead of reforming, grow worse and worse, and are more obstinate and daring in their impieties, God shall send them away, cast them out, and lead them forth with the workers of iniquity, i. e. he shall appoint them their portion with the worst of sinners. Note, 1. Sinful ways are crooked ways; sin is the perverting of that which is right. 2. The doom of those who turn aside to those crooked ways, out of the right way, will be the same with theirs that have all along walked in them; nay, and more grievous, for if any place in hell be hotter than other, that shall be the portion of hypocrites and apostates. God shall lead them forth, as prisoners are led forth to execution, *Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire; and these shall go away,* all their former righteousness shall not be mentioned unto them. The last words, *Peace upon Israel,* may be taken as a prayer; God preserve his Israel in peace, when his judgments are abroad reckoning with evil-doers. We read them as a promise, *Peace shall be upon Israel;* that is, (1.) When those that have treacherously deserted the ways of God meet with their own destruction, they that faithfully adhere to them, though they may have trouble in their way, their end shall be peace. (2.) The destruction of those that walk in crooked ways, will contribute to the peace and safety of the church; when Herod was cut off, the word of God grew, *Acts xii. 23, 24.* (3.) The peace and happiness of God's Israel will be the vexation, and will add much to the torment of those that perish in their wickedness, *Luke xiii. 28. Isaiah lxi. 13. My servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed.*

P S A L M CXXVI.

It was with reference to some great and surprizing deliverance of the people of God, out of bondage and distress, that this psalm was penned; most likely their return out of Babylon in Ezra's time. Though Babylon be not mentioned here, as it is, Psal. cxxxvii. Yet their captivity there was the most remarkable captivity both in itself, and as their return out of it was typical of our redemption by Christ. Probably it was penned by Ezra, or some of the prophets that came up with the first. We read of singers of the children of Asaph, that famous psalmist that returned then, Ezra ii. 41. It being a song of ascents, in which twice the same things are repeated with advancement, ver. 2, 3. and ver. 4, 5. it is put here among the rest of the psalms that bear that title. (1.) Those that were returned out of captivity are here called upon to be thankful, ver. 1, 2, 3. (2.) Those that were yet remaining in captivity are here prayed for, ver. 4. and encouraged, ver. 5, 6. It will be easy in singing this psalm to apply it either to any particular deliverance wrought for the church, or our own land, or to the great work of our salvation by Christ.

A song of degrees.

1. **W**hen the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. 2. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, the LORD hath done great things for them. 3. The LORD hath done great things for us: *whereof* we are glad.

While the people of Israel were captives in Babylon, their harps were hung upon the willow-trees, for then God called to weeping and mourning, then he mourned unto them, and they lamented; but now their captivity is turned, they resume their harps; providence pipes to them, and they dance. Thus must we accommodate ourselves to all the dispensations of providence, and be suitably affected with them. And the harps are never more melodiously tunable than after such a melancholy disuse. The long want of mercies greatly sweetens their return.

Here is, 1. The deliverance God had wrought for them. He turned again the captivity of Zion. It is possible that Zion may be in captivity, for the punishment of her degeneracy; but her captivity shall be turned again when the end is answered, and the work designed by it is effected. Cyrus, for reasons of state, proclaimed liberty to God's captives, and yet it was the Lord's doing, according to his word many years before. God sent them into captivity, not as dross is put into the fire to be consumed, but as gold to be refined. Observe, the release of Israel is called the turning again of the captivity of Zion, the holy hill, where God's tabernacle and dwelling-place was, for the restoring of their sacred interests, and the reviving of the publick exercise of their religion, was the most valuable advantage of their return out of captivity.

2. The pleasing surprize that this was to them. They were amazed at it; it came so suddenly, that at first they were in confusion, not knowing what to make of it, nor what it was tending to; we thought ourselves like men that dream, we thought it too good news to be true, and began to question whether we were well awake or no, and whether it was not still, as sometimes it had been to the prophets, only a representation of it in vision; as St. Peter for a while thought his deliverance was, Acts xii. 9. Sometimes the people of God are thus prevented with the blessings of his goodness, before they are aware. *We were like them that are recovered to health*, so Dr. Hammond reads it: such a comfortable happy change it was to us, as life from the dead, or sudden ease from exquisite pain; we thought ourselves in a new world. And the surprize of it put them into an ecstasy and transport of joy, that they could scarce contain themselves within the bounds of decency in the expressions of it, *Our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing*. Thus they gave vent to their joy, gave glory to their God, and gave notice to all about them what wonders God had wrought for them. They that were laughed at, now laugh, and a new song is put into their mouths. It was a laughter of joy in God, not scorn of their enemies.

3. The notice which their neighbours took of it. *They said among the heathen*, Jehovah, the God of Israel, hath done great things for that people, such as our gods cannot do for us. The heathen had observed their calamity, and had triumphed in it, Jer. xxii. 8, 9. Psal. cxxxvii. 7. Now they could not but observe their deliverance, and admire that. It put a reputation upon those that had been scorned and despised, and made them look considerable; besides that, it turned greatly to the honour of God, and extorted from those that set up other gods in competition with him, an acknowledgment of his wisdom, power and providence.

4. The acknowledgments which they themselves made of it, ver. 3. The heathen were but spectators, and spoke of it only

as matter of news; they had no part or lot in the matter; but the people of God spake of it as sharers in it. 1. With application; he hath done great things for us, things that we are interested in, and have advantage by. Thus it is comfortable speaking of the redemption Christ hath wrought out, as wrought out for us, *who loved me, and gave himself for me*. 2. With affection, whereof we are glad. The heathen were amazed at it, and some of them angry, but we are glad. While Israel went a whoring from their God, joy was forbidden them, Hos. ix. 1. but now the iniquity of Jacob was purged by the captivity, and their sin taken away, now God makes them to rejoice. It is the repenting reforming people that are, and shall be the rejoicing people. Observe here, (1.) God's appearances for his people are to be looked upon as great things. (2.) God is to be eyed as the author of all the great things done for the church. (3.) It is good to observe how the church's deliverances are for us, that we may rejoice in them.

4. Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south. 5. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. 6. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

These verses look forward to the mercies that were yet wanted; they that were come out of captivity, were still in distress, even in their own land, Neh. i. 3. and many yet remained in Babylon. And therefore they rejoice with trembling, and bear upon their hearts the grievances that were yet to be redressed. We have here,

1. A prayer for the perfecting of their deliverance, ver. 4. *Turn again our captivity*. Let those that are returned to their own land, be eased of the burthens which they are yet groaning under. Let those that remain in Babylon have their hearts stirred up, as ours were to take the benefit of the liberty granted. The beginnings of mercy are encouragements to us to pray for the compleating of it. And while we are here in this world, there will still be matter for prayer, even then when we are most furnished with matter for praise. And when we are free, and in prosperity ourselves, we must not be unmindful of our brethren that are in trouble and under restraint. The bringing of those that were yet in captivity to join with their brethren that were returned, would be as welcome to both sides, as streams of water in these countries, that lying far south were parched and dry. As cold water to a thirsty soul, so would this good news be from that far country, Prov. xxv. 2, 5.

2. A promise for their encouragement to wait for it, assuring them that though they had now a sorrowful time, yet it would end well. But the promise is expressed generally, that all the faints may comfort themselves with this confidence, that their seedness of tears will certainly end in a harvest of joy at last, ver. 5, 6.

1. Suffering faints have a seedness of tears. They are in tears often, they share in the calamities of human life, and commonly have a greater share in them than others. But they sow in tears, i. e. They do the duty of an afflicted state, and so answer the intentions of the providences they are under. Weeping must not hinder sowing, when we suffer ill, we must be doing well. Nay, as the ground is by the rain prepared for the seed, and the husbandman sometimes chuseth to sow in the wet, so we must improve times of affliction, as disposing us to repentance, and prayer, and humiliation. Nay, there are tears which are themselves the seed that we must sow; tears of sorrow for sin, our own and others; tears of sympathy with the afflicted church; and tears of tenderness in prayer and under the word. These are precious seed, such as the husbandman sows when corn is dear, and he has but little for his family, and therefore weeps to part with it, yet buries it under ground in expectation of receiving it again with advantage. Thus doth a good man sow in tears.

2. They shall have a harvest of joy. The troubles of the faints will not last always, but when they have done their work, shall have a happy period. The captives in Babylon were long sowing in tears, but at length they were brought forth with joy, and then they reaped the benefit of their patient suffering, and brought their sheaves with them to their own land, in their experiences of the goodness of God to them. Job, and Joseph, and David, and many others, had harvests of joy after a sorrowful seedness. They that sow in the tears of godly sorrow, shall reap in the joy of a sealed pardon, and a settled peace. Those that sow to the spirit in this vale of tears, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting, and that will be a joyful harvest indeed. *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be for ever comforted*.

P S A L M CXXVII.

This is a family psalm, as divers before were state-poems, and church poems. It is entitled (as we read it) for Solomon, dedicated to him by his father. He having a house to build, a city to keep, and seed to raise up to his father, David directs him to look up

to God, and to depend upon his providence, without which all his wisdom, care and industry, would not serve. Some take it to have been penned by Solomon himself, and it may as well be read a song of Solomon, and he wrote a great many; and they compare it with his Ecclesiastes, the scope of both being the same, to shew the vanity of worldly care; and how necessary it is that we keep in with God. On him we must depend, (1.) For wealth, ver. 1, 2. (2.) For heirs to leave it to, ver. 3, 4, 5. In singing this psalm we must have our eye up unto God for success in all our undertakings, and a blessing upon all our comforts and enjoyments, because every creature is that to us, and no more than he makes it to be.

¶ A song of degrees for Solomon.

1. **E**XCEPT the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. 2. It is in vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep. 3. Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. 4. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man: so are children of the youth. 5. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

We are here taught to have a continual regard to the divine providence in all the concerns of this life. Solomon was cried up for a wise man, and would be apt to lean to his own understanding and forecast, and therefore his father teacheth him to look higher, and to take God along with him in his undertakings. He was to be a man of business, and therefore David instructed him how to manage his business under the direction of his religion; parents in teaching their children, should suit their exhortations to their condition and occasions.

We must have an eye to God,

1. In all the affairs and business of the family, even of the royal family, for king's houses are no longer safe than God protects them. We must depend upon God's blessing, and not our own contrivance,

(1.) For the raising of a family. *Except the Lord build the house by his providence and blessing, they labour in vain*, though never so ingenious that build it. We may understand it of the material house, except the Lord bless the building, it is to no purpose for men to build, no more than for the builders of Babel that attempted it, in defiance of heaven, or Hiel, that built Jericho under a curse. If the model and design be laid in pride and vanity, or if the foundations be laid in oppression and injustice, *Hab. ii. 11, 12.* to be sure God doth not build there; nay, if God be not acknowledged, we have no reason to expect his blessing, and without his blessing all is nothing. Or rather it is to be understood of the making of a family considerable that was mean; men labour to do this by advantageous matches, offices, employments, purchases, but all in vain, unless God build up the family, and raise the poor out of the dust. The best-laid project fails, unless God crown it with success. See *Mal. i. 4.*

(2.) For the securing of a family or a city, for that is it that is instanced in; if the guards of the city cannot secure it without God, much less can the good man of the house save his house from being broken up. Except the Lord keep the city from fire, from enemies, the watchmen that go about the city, or patrol upon the walls of it, though neither slumber nor sleep, wake but in vain, for a raging fire may break out, which the timeliest discoveries may not be able to prevent the mischief of. The guards may be slain, or the city betrayed, and lost by a thousand accidents, which the most watchful centinel or most cautious governor could not obviate.

(3.) For the enriching of a family; that is a work of time and thought, but cannot be effected without the favour of providence, no more than that which is the product of one happy turn. It is vain for you to rise up early and sit up late, and so to deny yourselves your bodily refreshments in the eager pursuit of the wealth of the world; usually those that rise early do not care for sitting up late, nor can those that sit up later easily persuade themselves to rise early; but there are some so hot upon the world, that they will do both, will rob their sleep to pay their cares; and they have as little comfort in their meals as in their rest, they eat the bread of sorrows. It is part of our sentence that we eat our bread in the sweat of our face, but those go farther, all their days they eat in darkness, *Eccl. v. 17.* They are continually full of care, which embitters their comforts, and makes their lives a burthen to them. All this is to get money, and all in vain except God prosper them, for riches are not always to men of understanding, *Eccl. ix. 11.* And they that love God, and are beloved of him, have their minds easy, and live very comfortably without this ado. Solomon was called Jedidiah, *Beloved of the Lord*, *2 Sam. xii. 25.* to him the kingdom was promised, and then it was in vain for Absalom to rise up early, to wheedle the

people, and for Adonijah to make such a bustle, and to say, *I will be king*; Solomon sits still, and being beloved of the Lord, to him he gives sleep and the kingdom too. Note, 1. Inordinate excessive care about the things of this world, is a vain and fruitless thing; we weary our selves for vanity if we have it, and often weary our selves in vain for it, *Hag. i. 6, 9.* 2. Bodily sleep is God's gift to his beloved. We owe it to his goodness, that our sleep is safe, *Psal. iv. 8.* that it is sweet, *Jer. xxxi. 25, 26.* Then God gives us sleep as he gives it to his beloved, when with it he gives us grace to lie down in his fear, our souls returning to him, and reposing in him as our rest, and when we awake to be still with him; and to use the refreshment we have by sleep in his service. He giveth his beloved sleep, *i. e.* quietness and contentment of mind, a comfortable enjoyment of what is present, and a comfortable expectation of what is to come. Our care must be to keep our selves in the love of God, and then we may be easy whether we have little or much of this world.

2. In the increase of the family; he shews,

(1.) That children are God's gift, ver. 3. The key of the womb in his hand; if children are withheld, it is God that withholds them, *Gen. xxx. 2.* if they are given, it is God that gives them, *Gen. xxxiii. 5.* and they are to us what he makes them, comforts or crosses; Solomon multiplied wives contrary to the law, but we never read of more than one son that he had; for those that desire children as an heritage from the Lord, must receive them in the way that he is pleased to give them, by lawful marriage to one wife, *Mal. ii. 15.* Therefore one, that he might seek a seed of God. But they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase. Children are an heritage, and a reward; and are so to be accounted blessings, and not burthens; for he that sends mouths, will send meat, if we trust in him, Obed-edom had eight sons, for the Lord blessed him because he had entertained the ark, *1 Chron. xxvi. 5.* Children are an heritage for the Lord, as well as from him; they are my children (saith God) which thou hast born unto me, *Ezek. xvi. 20.* and then they are most our honour and comfort, when they are accounted to him for a generation.

2. That they are a good gift, and a great support and defence to a family. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, that knows how to use them for his own safety and advantage, so are children of the youth, *i. e.* children born to their parents when they are young, which are the strongest and most healthful children, and are grown up to serve them by that time they need their service. Or rather, children that are themselves young; they are instruments of much good to their parents and families, which may fortify themselves with them against their enemies: The family that has a large stock of children, is like a quiver full of arrows of different sizes, we may suppose, but all of use one time or other; children of different capacities and inclinations, may be several ways serviceable to the family. He that has a numerous issue may boldly speak with his enemy in the gate in judgment, in battle he need not fear, having so many good seconds, so zealous, so faithful, and in the vigour of youth, as his own children, *1 Sam. ii. 4, 5.* Observe here, That children of the youth are arrows in the hand, which, with prudence, may be directed aright to the mark, God's glory, and the service of their generation; but afterwards, when they are gone abroad into the world, they are arrows out of the hand, it is too late to bend them then. But these arrows in the hand, too often prove arrows in the heart, a constant grief to their godly parents, whose grey hairs they bring with sorrow to the grave.

P S A L M CXXVIII.

This, as the former, is a psalm for families. In that we are taught, that the prosperity of our families depends upon the blessing of God; in this we are taught, that the only way to obtain that blessing, which will make our families comfortable, is to live in the fear of God, and in obedience to him. They that do so in general, they shall be blessed, ver. 1, 2, 4. In particular, (1.) They shall be prosperous and successful in their employments, ver. 2. (2.) Their relations shall be agreeable, ver. 3. (3.) They shall live to see their families brought up, ver. 6. (4.) They shall have the satisfaction of seeing the church of God in a flourishing condition, ver. 5, 6. We must sing this psalm in the firm belief of this truth, that religion and piety is the best friend to outward prosperity, giving God the praise that it is so, and that we have found it so; and encourage ourselves and others with it.

¶ A song of degrees.

1. **B**lessed is every one that feareth the LORD: that walketh in his ways. 2. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. 3. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive-plants, round about thy table. 4. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed, that feareth the LORD. 5. The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem, all the

the days of thy life. 6. Yea, thou shalt see thy childrens children, and peace upon Israel.

It is here shewed, that godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

1. It is here again and again laid down as an undoubted truth, that *they that are truly holy, are truly happy*. They whose blessed state we are here assured of, are such as *fear the Lord*, and *walk in his ways*: That have a deep reverence of God upon their spirits, and evidence it by a regular and constant conformity to his will. Where the fear of God is a commanding principle in the heart, the tenor of the conversation will be accordingly; and in vain do we pretend to be of those that fear God, if we do not make conscience both of keeping to his ways, and not trifling in them, or drawing back. Such are blessed, *ver. 1.* and shall be blessed, *ver. 4.* God blessed them, and his pronouncing them blessed, makes them so. They are blessed now, they shall be blessed still, and for ever. This blessedness arising from this blessing, is here secured, (1.) To all the saints universally; *Blessed is every one that fears the Lord*, whoever he be; in every nation he that fears God, and works righteousness, is accepted of him, and therefore is blessed. Whether he be high or low, rich or poor in the world, if religion rule him, it will protect and enrich him. (2.) To such a saint in particular; thus shall the man be blessed: Not only the nation, the church in its public capacity, but the particular person in his private interests. (3.) We are encouraged to apply it to ourselves, *ver. 2.* *Happy shalt thou be*; thou mayest take the comfort of the promise, and expect the benefit of it, as if it were directed to thee by name, if thou *fear God, and walk in his ways*. Happy shalt thou be, that is, *it shall be well with thee*: Whatever befalls thee, good shall be brought out of it; it shall be well with thee while thou livest, better when thou diest, and best of all to eternity. It is asserted, *ver. 4.* with a note commanding attention, *Behold, thus shall the man be blessed*; behold it by faith in the promise; behold it by observation in the performance of the promise; behold it with assurance that it shall be so, for God is faithful; and with admiration that it should be so, for we merit no favour, no blessing from him.

2. Particular promises are here made to godly people, which they may depend upon, as far as is for God's glory and their good; and that is enough.

1. That by the blessing of God, they shall get an honest livelihood, and live comfortably upon it. It is not promised that they shall live at ease without care or pains, but *thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands*. Here is a double promise, (1.) That they shall have something to do, (for an idle life is a miserable uncomfortable life) and shall have health and strength, and capacity of mind to do it, and shall not be forced to be beholden to others for necessary food, and to live as the disabled poor do upon the labours of other people. It is as much a mercy as it is a duty, *with quietness to work and eat our own bread*, 2 Thes. iii. 12. (2.) That they shall succeed in their employments, and they and theirs shall enjoy what they get, others shall not come and eat the bread out of their mouths, nor shall it be taken from them either by oppressive rulers, or invading enemies; God will not blast it and blow upon it, as he did, *Hag. i. 8.* and his blessing will make a little go a great way. It is very pleasant to enjoy the fruits of our own industry; as the sleep, so the food of a labouring man is sweet.

2. That they shall have abundance of comfort in their family relations. As a wife and children are very much a man's care, so if by the grace of God they are such as they should be, they are very much a man's delight, as much as any creature-comfort. (1.) The wife shall be *as a vine by the sides of the house*, not only as a spreading vine which serves for an ornament, but as a fruitful vine which is for profit, and with the fruit whereof both God and man are honoured, *Judg. ix. 13.* The vine is a weak and tender plant, and needs to be supported and cherished, but it is a very valuable plant, and some think, because all the products of it were prohibited to the Nazarites, it was the *tree of knowledge* itself. The wife's place is *the husband's house*, there her business lies, and that is her cattle; *Where is Sarah thy wife? Behold in the tent*, where should she be else? Her place is *by the sides of the house*, not under foot to be trampled on, nor yet upon the house-top to domineer; if she be so, she is but *as the grass upon the house-top*, in the next psalm; but *on the side of the house*, being a rib out of the side of the man, she shall be a loving wife, as the vine that cleaveth to the house side, an obedient wife, as the vine that is pliable, and grows as it is directed. She shall be fruitful, as the vine, not only in children, but in the fruits of wisdom and righteousness, and good management, the *branches* of which *run over the wall*, Gen. xlix. 22. *Psal. lxxx. 11.* *Like a fruitful vine*, not cumbring the ground, or bringing forth sour grapes, or grapes of Sodom, but good fruit. (2.) The children shall be *as olive plants*, likely in time to be olive trees, and though wild by nature, yet grafted into the good olive, and partaking of its root and fatness, Rom. xi. 17. It is pleasant to parents that have a table spread, though but with ordinary fare, to see their children round about it; to have many children, enough to sur-

round it, and those with them, and not scattered, or the parents forced from them; Job makes it one of the first instances of his former prosperity that *his children were about him*, Job. xxi. 5. To have them at table to keep up the pleasantness of the table talk: To have them in health, craving food and not physick: To have them like *olive plants*, straight and green, sucking in the sap of their good education, and likely in due time to be serviceable.

3. That they shall have those good things which God has promised, and which they pray for. *The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion*, where the ark of the covenant was, and where the pious Israelites attended with their devotions. *Blessings out of Zion* are the best blessings, which flow not from common providence, but from special grace, *Psal. xx. 2.*

4. That they shall live long to enjoy the comforts of the rising generations, thou shalt *see thy childrens children*, as Joseph, Gen. l. 23. Thy family shall be built up, and continued, and thou shalt have the pleasure of seeing it. *Childrens children*, if they be good children, are the crown of old men, (*Prov. xvii. 6.*) who are apt to be fond of their grandchildren.

5. That they shall see the welfare of God's church, and the land of their nativity, which every man that fears God is no less concerned for, than for the prosperity of his own family. Thou shalt be blessed in Zion's blessing, and wilt think thyself so. Thou shalt *see the good of Jerusalem* as long as thou livest, though thou livest long; and shalt not have thy private comforts allayed and embittered by public troubles. A good man can have little comfort in seeing his *childrens children*, unless, withal, he see peace upon Israel, and have hopes of transmitting the entail of religion, pure and entire to those that shall come after him, for that is the best inheritance.

P S A L M CXXIX.

This psalm relates to the public concerns of God's Israel: It is not certain when it was penned, probably when they were in captivity in Babylon, or about the time of their return. (1.) They look back with thankfulness for the former deliverances God had wrought for them and their fathers, out of the many distresses they had been in from time to time, ver. 1.—4. (2.) They look forward with a believing prayer for, and prospect of the destruction of all the enemies of Zion, ver. 5, 8. In singing this psalm, we may apply it both ways to the gospel Israel, which like the Old Testament Israel has weathered many a storm, and is still threatned my many enemies.

A song of degrees.

1. **M**Any a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say: 2. Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me. 3. The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows. 4. The LORD is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.

The church of God in its several ages is here spoken of, or rather, here speaks as one single person, now old and grey-headed, but calling to remembrance the former days, and reflecting upon the times of old. And upon the review it is found,

1. That the church has been often greatly distressed by its enemies on earth. *Israel may now say*, I am the people that has been oppressed more than any people, that has been *as a speckled bird*, pecked at by *all the birds round about*, Jer. xii. 9. It is true, they brought their troubles upon themselves by their sins, it was for them that God punished them; but it was for the peculiarity of their covenant, and the singularities of their religion, that their neighbours hated and persecuted them. For these *many a time have they afflicted me from my youth*. Note, God's people have always had many enemies, and the state of the church from its infancy has frequently been an afflicted state. Israel's youth was in Egypt, or in the times of the Judges, then they were afflicted, and from thence-forward more or less. The gospel-church ever since it had a being, has been by times afflicted; and it bare this yoke most of all in its youth, witness the ten persecutions which the primitive church groaned under, *ver. 3.* *The plowers plowed upon my back*. We read *Psal. cxxv. 3.* *of the rod of the wicked upon the lot of the righteous*, where we rather expected the plow, to mark it out for themselves; here we read of the *plow* of the wicked *upon the back of the righteous*, where we rather expected to find the rod. But the metaphors in both places are jumbled, the sense however of both is the same, and is too plain, that the enemies of God's people have all along used them very barbarously. They tare them as the husbandman tears the ground with his plow-share, to pull them to pieces, and get all they could out of them, and so to *wear out the saints of the most High*, as the ground is worn out that had been long tilled, tilled (as we say) quite out of heart. When God permitted them to plow thus, he intended it for his peoples good, that their fallow ground being thus broken up, he might

flow the seeds of his grace upon them, and reap a harvest of good fruit from them: howbeit, the enemies meant not so, neither did their hearts think so, *Iſa. x. 7. they made long their furrows*, never knew when to have done, aiming at nothing less than the destruction of the church. Many by the furrows they made on the backs of God's people, understand the stripes they gave them. *The cutters cut upon my back*, so they read it: The saints have often had trials of cruel scourgings, (probably, the captives had) and cruel mockings, (for we read of the scourge, or lash of the tongue) *Heb. xi. 36.* and so it was fulfilled in Christ, who gave his back to the smiters, *Iſa. l. 6.* Or, it may refer to the desolations they made of the cities of Israel: *Zion shall for your sake be plowed as a field*, *Mic. iii. 12.*

2. That the church has been always graciously delivered by her Friend in heaven.

(1.) The enemies projects have been defeated; they have afflicted the church in hopes to ruin it, but they have not gained their point; many a storm it has weathered, many a shock, and many a brunt it has born, and yet is in being: *They have not prevailed against me.* One would wonder how this ship has lived at sea, when it has been tossed with tempests, and all the waves and billows have gone over it. Christ has built his church upon a rock, and the gates of hell have not prevailed against it, nor ever shall.

(2.) The enemies power has been broken; God has cut asunder the cords of the wicked; has cut their gears, their traces, and so spoiled their plowing; has cut their scourges, and so spoiled their lashing; has cut the bands of union, by which they were combined together; has cut the bands of captivity, in which they held God's people. God has many ways of disabling wicked men to do the mischief they design against his church, and shaming their counsels.

These words, *The Lord is righteous*, may refer either to the distresses, or to the deliverances of the church. 1. *The Lord is righteous*, in suffering Israel to be afflicted. This the people of God were always ready to own, that how unjust soever their enemies were, God was just in all that was brought upon them, *Neh. ix. 33.* 2. *The Lord is righteous*, in not suffering Israel to be ruined; for he has promised to preserve it a people to himself, and he will be as good as his word. He is righteous in reckoning with their persecutors, and rendering to them a recompence, *1 Thes. i. 6.*

5. Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion. 6. Let them be as the grass upon the house-tops, which withereth afore it groweth up: 7. Where-with the mower filleth not his hand; nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom. 8. Neither do they which go by, say, the blessing of the LORD be upon you: we bless you in the name of the LORD.

The psalmist having triumphed in the defeat of the many designs that had been laid as deep as hell to ruin the church, here concludes his psalm as Deborah did her song, *So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord*, *Judg. v. ult.*

1. There are many that hate Zion, that hate Zion's God, his worship and his worshippers, that have an antipathy to religion and religious people, that seek the ruin of both, and do what they can, that God may not have a church in the world.

2. We ought to pray that all their attempts against the church may be frustrated, that in them they may be confounded, and turned back with shame, as those that have not have been able to bring to pass their enterprize and expectation. *Let them all be confounded*, is as much as they shall be all confounded. The confusion imprecated and predicted is illustrated by a similitude; while God's people shall flourish, as the loaded palm-tree, or the green and fruitful olive, their enemies shall wither as the grass upon the house-top. As men they are not to be feared, for they shall be made as grass, *Iſa. li. 12.* But as they are enemies to Zion, they are so certainly marked for ruin, that they may be looked upon with as much contempt as the grass on the house-tops, which is little, and short, and sour, and good for nothing.

(1.) It perisheth presently, it withers before it groweth up to any maturity, having no root; and the higher its place is, which perhaps is its pride, the more it is exposed to the scorching heat of the sun, and consequently the sooner doth it wither. *It withers before it is plucked up*, so some read it. The enemies of God's church wither of themselves, and stay not till they are rooted out by the judgments of God.

(2.) It is of no use to any body, nor are they but the unprofitable burthens of the earth; nor will their attempts against Zion ever ripen or come to any head; nor, whatever they promise themselves, will they get any more by them, than the husbandman doth by the grass on his house-top. *Their harvest will be a heap in the day of grief*, *Iſa. xvii. 11.*

3. No wise man will pray God to bless the mowers or reapers, *ver. 8.* Observe, 1. It has been an ancient and laudable custom, not only to salute and wish a good day to strangers and travellers, but particularly to pray for the prosperity of harvest labourers. Thus Boaz prayed for his reapers, *Ruth ii. 4.* *The Lord be with you.* We must thus acknowledge God's providence, testify

our good will to our neighbours, and commend their industry, and it will be accepted of God as a pious ejaculation, if it comes from a devout and upright heart. 2. Religious expressions being sacred things, must never be made use of in light and ludicrous actions. Mowing the grass on the house-top would be a jest, and therefore those that have a reverence for the name of God, will not prostitute to it the usual forms of salutation, which favoured of devotion, for holy things must not be jested with. 3. It is a dangerous thing to let the churches enemies have our good wishes in their designs against the church. If we wish them God speed, we are partakers of their evil deeds, *2 John 11.* When it is said, none will bless them, and shew them respect, more is implied, that all wise and good people will cry out shame on them, and beg of God to defeat them; and wo to those that have the prayers of the saints against them. *I cursed his habitation*, *Job v. 3.*

P S A L M CXXX.

This psalm relates not to any temporal concern, either personal or publick, but it is wholly taken up in the affairs of the soul. It is reckoned one of the seven penitential psalms, which have sometimes been made use of by penitents upon their admission into the church; and in singing it we are all concerned to apply it to ourselves. The psalmist here expresseth, (1.) His desire towards God, *ver. 1, 2.* (2.) His repentance before God, *ver. 3, 4.* (3.) His attendance upon God, *ver. 5, 6.* (4.) His expectations from God, *ver. 7, 8.* And as in water face answers to face, so doth the heart of one humble penitent to another.

A song of degrees.

1. OUT of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD. 2. Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. 3. If thou, LORD, shouldst mark iniquities: O LORD who shall stand? 4. But there is forgiveness with thee: that thou mayest be feared.

In these verses we are taught,

1. Whatever condition we are in, though never so deplorable, to continue calling upon God, *ver. 1.* The best men may sometimes be in the depths, in great trouble and affliction, and utterly at a loss what to do; in the depths of distress, and almost in the depths of despair; the spirit low and dark, sinking and drooping, cast down and disquieted: But in the greatest depths it is our privilege that we may cry unto God, and be heard. A prayer may reach the heights of heaven, though not out of the depths of hell, yet out of the depths of the greatest trouble we can be in in this world; Jeremiah's out of the dungeon, Daniel's out of the den, and Jonah's out of the fish's belly. It is our duty and interest to cry unto God, for that is the likeliest way both to prevent our sinking lower, and to recover us out of the horrible pit, and miry clay, *Psal. xl. 1, 2.*

2. While we continue calling upon God to assure ourselves of an answer of peace from him; for this is that which David in faith prays for, *ver. 2.* *Lord, hear my voice*, my complaint and prayer, and let thine ears be attentive to the voice, both of my afflictions, and of my supplications.

3. We are taught to humble ourselves before the justice of God, as guilty in his sight, and unable to answer him for one of a thousand of our offences, *ver. 3.* *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* His calling God Lord twice in some few words, *Jeh* and *Adonai*, is very emphatical, and speaks a very awful sense of God's glorious majesty, and a dread of his wrath. Let us learn here, (1.) To acknowledge our iniquities, that we cannot justify ourselves before God, or plead not guilty. There is that which is remarkable in our iniquities, and is liable to be animadverted upon. (2.) To own the power and justice of God, which is such, that if he should be extreme to mark what we do amiss, there were no hopes of coming off. His eye can discover enough in the best man to ground a condemnation upon; and if he proceed against us, we have no way to help ourselves, we cannot stand, but shall certainly be cast. If God deal with us in strict justice, we are undone; if he make remarks upon our iniquities, he will find them to be many and great; greatly aggravated, and very provoking: And then if he should proceed accordingly, he would shut us out from all hope of his favour, and shut us up under his wrath; and what could we do to help ourselves? we could not make our escape, nor resist or bear up under his avenging hand. (3.) Let us admire God's patience and forbearance; we were undone if he should mark iniquities, and he knows it, and therefore bears with us: It is of his mercy that we are not consumed by his wrath.

4. We are taught to cast ourselves upon the pardoning mercy of God, and to comfort ourselves with that when we see ourselves obnoxious to his justice, *ver. 4.* Here is, (1.) God's grace discovered, and pleaded with him, by a penitent sinner: *But there is forgiveness with thee.* It is our unspeakable comfort in all our approaches to God, that there is forgiveness with him, for that is it

it we need. He has put himself into a capacity to pardon sin, he has declared himself gracious and merciful, and ready to forgive, *Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.* He has promised to forgive the sins of those that do repent. Never any that dealt with him found him implacable, but easy to be intreated, and swift to shew mercy. With us there is iniquity, and therefore it is well for us that with him there is forgiveness. *There is a propitiation with thee*, so some read it: Jesus Christ is the great propitiation, the ransom which God has found; he is ever with him, as advocate for us, and through him we hope to obtain forgiveness. 2. Our duty designed in that discovery, and inferred from it. *There is forgiveness with thee*, not that thou mayst be made bold with, and presumed upon, but *that thou mayst be feared*: In general, that thou mayst be worshipped and served by the children of men, who, being sinners, could have no dealings with God, if he were not a master that could pass by a great many faults: But this encourages us to come into his service, that we shall not be turned off for every misdeemeanour; no, nor for any, if we truly repent. 'This doth, in a special manner, invite those that have sinned to repent, and return to the fear of God, that he is gracious and merciful, and will receive them upon their repentance, *Joel ii. 13. Matt. iii. 2.* and particularly we are to have a holy awe and reverence of God's pardoning mercy, *Hos. iii. 5. They shall fear the Lord, and his goodness*; and then we may expect the benefit of the forgiveness that is with God, when we make it the object of our holy fear.

5. I will wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. 6. My soul waiteth for the LORD, more than they that watch for the morning: *I say, more than they that watch for the morning.* 7. Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. 8. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

Here, 1. The psalmist engageth himself to trust in God, and to wait for him, *ver. 5, 6.* Observe, (1.) His dependence upon God, expressed in a climax, it being a song of degrees, or ascents: *I wait for the Lord*; from him I expect relief and comfort, believing it will come, longing till it doth come, but patiently bearing the delay of it, and resolving to look for it from no other hand. *My soul doth wait*, i. e. I wait for him in sincerity, and not in profession only. I am an expectant, and it is *for the Lord* that *my soul waiteth*, for the gifts of his grace, and the operations of his power. (2.) The ground of that dependence; *In his word do I hope.* We must hope for that only which he hath promised in his word, and not for the creatures of our own fancy and imagination; and we must hope for it because he hath promised it, and not from any opinion of our own merit. (3.) The degree of that dependence; *More than they that watch for the morning*; who are, 1. Well assured that the morning will come, and so am I, that God will return in mercy to me, according to his promise; for God's covenant is more firm than the ordinances of day and night, for they shall come to an end, but that is everlasting. 2. Very desirous that it would come. Centinels that keep guard upon the walls, they that watch with sick people, and travellers that are abroad upon their journey, long before day, wish to see the dawning of the day; but more earnestly doth this good man long for the tokens of God's favour, and the visits of his grace; and more readily will he be aware of his first appearances, than they are of day. Dr. Hammond reads it thus; *My soul hastens to the Lord, from the guards in the morning, the guards in the morning*; and gives this sense of it, To thee I daily betake my self, early in the morning, addressing my prayers, and my very soul before thee, at the time that the priests offer their morning sacrifice.

2. He encourageth all the people of God, in like manner, to depend upon him, and trust in him: *Let Israel hope in the Lord, and wait for him*; not only the body of the people, but every good man, who *surnames himself by the name of Israel*, *Isa. xlv. 5.* Let all that devote themselves to God, cheerfully stay themselves upon him, *ver. 7, 8.* for two reasons: 1. Because the light of nature discovers to us, that *there is mercy with him*, that the God of Israel is a merciful God, and *the Father of mercies. Mercy is with him*; not only inherent in his nature, but it is his delight, it is his darling attribute; it is with him in all his works, in all his counsels. 2. Because the light of the gospel discovers to us, that *there is redemption with him*, contrived by him, and to be wrought out in the fulness of time; it was in the beginning hid in God. See here, (1.) The nature of this redemption; it is redemption from sin, from all sin; and therefore can be no other but that eternal redemption which Jesus Christ became the author of; for it is he that *saves his people from their sins*, *Matt. i. 21.* that *redeems them from all iniquity*, *Tit. ii. 14.* and *turns away ungodliness from Jacob*, *Rom. xi. 26.* It is he that redeems us both from the condemning, and from the commanding power of sin. (2.) The riches of this redemption; it is *plenteous redemption*; there is an all-sufficient fulness of merit and grace in the Redeemer, enough for all, enough for each; enough for me, saith the believer. Re-

demption from sin includes redemption from all other evils, and therefore is a *plenteous redemption*. (3.) The persons to whom the benefits of this redemption belong: *He shall redeem Israel; Israel according to the spirit*; all those that are in covenant with God as Israel was, and that are *Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile*.

P S A L M CXXXI.

This psalm is David's profession of humility; but humbly made with thankfulness to God for his grace, and not in vain-glory. It is probable enough, that (as most interpreters suggest) David made this protestation in answer to the calumnies of Saul and his courtiers, who represented David as an ambitious, aspiring man, who, under pretence of a divine appointment, sought the kingdom in the pride of his heart. But he appeals to God that, on the contrary, 1. *He aimed at nothing high or great, ver. 1.* 2. *He was very easy in every condition to which God allotted him, ver. 2. and therefore,* 3. *He encourageth all good people to trust in God as he did, ver. 3.* Some have made it an objection against singing David's psalms, that there are many who cannot say, *Their heart is not haughty, &c.* It is true there are; but we may sing it for the same purpose that we read it, to teach and admonish ourselves, and one another, what we ought to be; with repentance that we have come short of being so, and humble prayer to God for his grace to make us so.

¶ A song of degrees of David.

1. LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise my self in great matters, or in things too high for me. 2. Surely I have behaved and quieted my self as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child. 3. Let Israel hope in the LORD from henceforth, and for ever.

Here are two things which will be comforts to us:

1. Conscience of our integrity. This was David's rejoicing, that his heart could witness for him, that he had walked humbly with his God, notwithstanding the censures he was under, and the temptations he was in.

(1.) He aimed not at a *high condition*, nor was he fond of making a figure in the world, but, if God had so ordered, could have been well content to spend all his days, as he did the beginning of them, in the sheep-folds. His own brother, in a passion, charged him with pride, *1 Sam. xvii. 28.* but the charge was groundless and unjust; God that searcheth the heart knew,

1. That he had no conceited opinion of himself, or his own merits: *Lord, my heart is not haughty.* Humble saints cannot think so well of themselves as others think of them; are not in love with their own shadow, nor do they magnify their own attainments or achievements. The love of God reigning in the heart, will subdue all inordinate self-love.

2. That he had neither a scornful, nor an aspiring look: *My eyes are not lofty*: either to look with envy upon those that are above me, or to look with disdain upon those that are below me. Where there is a proud heart, there is commonly a *proud look*, *Prov. vi. 15.* but the humble publican will not so much as lift up his eyes.

3. That he did not employ himself in things above his station; *in things too great, or too high for him*; not in studies too high; he made God's word his meditation, and did not amuse himself with matters of nice speculation, or doubtful disputation; or covet to be wise above what is written: It is learning high enough to know God, and our duty. Not in affairs too great: he followed his ewes, and never set up for a politician; no, nor for a soldier; for when his brethren went to the wars, he stayed at home to keep the sheep. It is our wisdom, and will be our praise, to keep within our sphere, and not to intrude into things which we have not seen, or meddle with that which doth not belong to us. Princes and scholars must not exercise themselves in matters too great, too high for men: and those in a low station, and of ordinary capacities, must not pretend to that which is out of their reach, and which they were not cut out for. These will fall under due shame that affect undue honours.

(2.) He was well reconciled to every condition that God placed him in, *ver. 2. I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother.* As he had not proudly aimed at the kingdom, so, since God had appointed him to it, he had not carried it insolent towards any, nor been restless in his attempts to get the crown before the time set; but, 1. He had been as humble as a little child about the age of a weaning, as manageable and governable, and as far from aiming at high things; as intirely at God's dispose, as the child at the dispose of the mother or nurse; as far from taking state upon him, though anointed to be king, or valuing himself upon the prospect of his future advancement, as a child in the arms. Our Saviour hath taught us humility by this comparison, *Matt. xviii. 3.* we must *become as little children*. 2. He had been as indifferent to the wealth and honour of this world, as a child is to the breast when it is thoroughly weaned from it.

it. *I have levelled and quieted myself* (so Dr. Hammond reads it) *as a child that is weaned.* This intimates, that our hearts are naturally as desirous of worldly things, as the babe is of the breast, and relish them; cry for them, are fond of them, play with them, and cannot live without them. But, by the grace of God, a soul that is sanctified, is weaned from those things. Providence puts wormwood upon the breast, and that helps to wean us. The child is, perhaps, cross and fretful while it is in the weaning, and thinks itself undone when it has lost the breast; but in a day or two it is forgotten, the fret is over, and it accommodates itself well enough to a new way of feeding; cares no longer for milk, but can bear strange meat. Thus doth a gracious soul quiet itself under the loss of that which it loved, and disappointment in that which it hoped for, and is easy whatever happens; lives, and lives comfortably, upon God and the covenant-grace, when creatures prove dry breasts. When our condition is not to our mind, we must bring our mind to our condition; and then we are easy to ourselves, and all about us, then our souls are *as a weaned child.*

2. Confidence in God; and this David recommends to all the Israel of God, no doubt, from his own experience of the benefit of it, *ver. 3. Let Israel hope in the Lord,* and let them continue to do so, *from henceforth and for ever.* Though David could himself wait patiently and quietly for the crown designed him, yet, perhaps, Israel, the people whose darling he was, would be ready to attempt something in favour of him before the time; he therefore endeavours to quiet them too, and bids them *hope in the Lord,* that they should see a happy change of the face of affairs in due time. *Thus it is good to hope, and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord.*

P S A L M CXXXII.

It is probable, this psalm was penned by Solomon, to be sung at the dedication of the temple which he built according to the charge his father gave him, 1 Chron. xxviii. 2, &c. Having fulfilled his trust, he begs of God to own what he had done. 1. He had built this house for the honour and service of God; and when he brings the ark into it, the token of God's presence, he desires God himself would come and take possession of it, ver. 8, 9, 10. With these words Solomon concluded his prayer, 2 Chron. vi. 41, 42. 2. He had built it in pursuance of the orders he had received from his father, and therefore his pleas to enforce these petitions, refer to David. (1.) He pleads David's piety towards God, ver. 1,—7. (2.) He pleads God's promise to David, ver. 11,—18. The former introduceth his petition, the latter follows it as an answer to it. In singing this psalm, we must have a concern for the Gospel church, as the temple of God, and a dependence upon Christ, as David our king, in whom the mercies of God are sure mercies.

¶ A song of degrees.

1. **L**ORD, remember David, and all his afflictions: 2. How he swore unto the LORD, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob. 3. Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed: 4. I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eye-lids. 5. Until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob. 6. Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood. 7. We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool. 8. Arise, O LORD, into thy rest: thou, and the ark of thy strength. 9. Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness: and let thy saints shout for joy. 10. For thy servant Davids sake, turn not away the face of thine anointed.

In these verses we have Solomon's address to God for his favour to him and to his government, and his acceptance of his building a house to God's name.

Observe, 1. What he pleads: two things.

(1.) That what he had done, was in pursuance of the pious vow which his father David had made to build a house for God. Solomon was a wise man, yet pleads not any merit of his own; I am not worthy, for whom thou shouldst do this; but, *Lord, remember David,* with whom thou madest the covenant; as Moses prayed, *Exod. xxxii. 13. Remember Abraham,* the first trustee of the covenant; remember *all his afflictions,* all the troubles of his life, which his being anointed was the occasion of; or, his care and concern about the ark, and what an uneasiness it was to him that the ark was in curtains, *2 Sam. vii. 2. Remember all his humility and meekness,* so some read it; all that pious and devout affection with which he had made the following vow. Note, It is not amiss for us to put God in mind of our predecessors in profession and their afflictions, their services and sufferings; God's covenant with them, the experiences they have had of his goodness; the care they took of, and the many prayers they put up for those that should come after them. We may apply it to Christ,

the Son of David, and to all his afflictions; Lord, remember the covenant made with him, and the satisfaction made by him; *Remember all his offerings,* Psalm xx. 3. *i. e.* all his sufferings.

He especially pleads the solemn vow that David had made as soon as ever he was settled in his government, and before he was well settled in a house of his own, that he would build a house for God. Observe,

1. Who he bound himself to; *To the Lord, to the mighty God of Jacob.* Vows are to be made to God, who is a party as well as a witness. The Lord is the mighty One of Jacob: Jacob's God, and a mighty One, whose power is engaged for Jacob's defence and deliverance. Jacob is weak; but the God of Jacob is a mighty One.

2. What he bound himself to do; to *find out a place for the Lord,* *i. e.* for the ark, the token of his presence. He had read in the law frequent mention of the *place that God would choose to put his name there,* to which all the tribes should resort. When he came to the crown there was no such place, Shiloh was deserted, and no other place was pitched upon, for want of which the feasts of the Lord were not kept with due solemnity: Well, saith David, I will find out such a place for the general rendezvous of all the tribes, a place of *habitation for the mighty One of Jacob:* a place for the ark, where there shall be room both for the priests and people to attend upon it.

3. How intent he was upon it; he would not settle in his house; nay, he would not sleep in his bed till he had brought this matter to some head, *ver. 3, 4.* The thing had been long talked of, and nothing done, till at last David, when he went out one morning about publick business, made a vow, that before night he would come to a resolution in this matter, and would determine the place either where the tent should be pitched for the reception of the ark, at the beginning of his reign, or rather, where Solomon should build the temple, which was not fixed till the latter end of his reign, just after the pestilence, with which he was punished for numbring the people, *1 Chron. xxii. 1. Then David said, This is the house of the Lord.* And, perhaps, it was upon occasion of that judgment that he made this vow, being apprehensive that one of God's controversies with him, was for his dilatoriness in this matter. Note, When needful work is to be done for God, it is good for us to task ourselves, and tie ourselves to a time, because we are apt to put off. It is good in the morning to cut out work for the day, binding ourselves that we will do it before we sleep, only with submission to providence; *for we know not what a day may bring forth:* Especially, in the great work of conversion to God, we must be thus solicitous, thus zealous; we have good reason to resolve that we will not enjoy the comforts of this life, till we have laid a foundation for hopes of a better.

(2.) That it was in pursuance of the expectations of the people of Israel, *ver. 6, 7.* 1. They were inquisitive after the ark; for they lamented its obscurity, *1 Sam. vii. 2. They heard of it at Ephratah,* *i. e.* at Shiloh, in the tribe of Ephraim, there they were told it had been, but it was gone; they *found it* at last *in the fields of the wood,* *i. e.* in Kirjath-jearim, which signifies the city of woods. Thence all Israel fetched it with great solemnity in the beginning of David's reign, *1 Chron. xiii. 6.* so that in building this house for the ark, Solomon had gratified all Israel; they need not go about to seek the ark any more, they now knew where to find it. 2. They were resolved to attend it. Let us but have a convenient place, and *we will go into his tabernacle,* to pay our homage there; *we will worship at his footstool,* as subjects and supplicants; which we neglected to do, for want of such a place, *in the days of Saul,* *1 Chron. xiii. 3.*

2. What he prays for, *ver. 8, 9, 10.*

(1.) That God would vouchsafe, not only to take possession of, but to take up his residence in this temple which he had built. *Arise, O Lord, into thy rest,* and let this be it, *thou, even the ark of thy strength,* the pledge of thy presence, thy mighty presence.

(2.) That God would give grace to the ministers of the sanctuary to do their duty: *Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness;* let them appear righteous both in their administrations and in their conversations, and let both be according to the rule. Note, Righteousness is the best ornament of a minister. Holiness towards God, and goodness towards all men, are habits for ministers, of the necessity of which there is no dispute. They are *thy priests,* and will therefore discredit their relation to thee, if they be not clothed with righteousness.

(3.) That the people of God might have the comfort of the due administration of holy ordinances among them: *Let thy saints shout for joy:* they did so when the ark was brought into the city of David, *2 Sam. vi. 15.* they will do so when the *priests are clothed with righteousness.* A faithful ministry is the joy of the saints; it is the matter of it; it is a friend and a furtherance to it; we are *helpers of your joy,* *2 Cor. i. ult.*

(4.) That Solomon's own prayer upon occasion of the dedicating of the temple might be accepted of God: *Turn not away the face of thine anointed,* *i. e.* deny me not the things I have asked of thee; send me not away ashamed. He pleads, 1. That he was the anointed of the Lord, and this he pleads as a type of Christ, the great anointed, who, in his intercession, urges his designation to his office. He is God's anointed, and therefore the Father hears him

him always. 2. That he was the son of David; for his sake do not deny me; and this is the christian's plea; for the sake of Christ, our David, *in whom thou art well pleased*, accept me. He is David whose name signifies beloved; and we are made accepted in the beloved. He is God's servant whom he *upholds*, Isa. xlii. 1. We have no merit of our own to plead, but for his sake, in whom there is a fulness of merit, let us find favour. When we pray for the prosperity of the church, we may, with great boldness, for Christ's sake, who purchased the church with his own blood; let both ministers and people do their duty.

11. The LORD hath sworn *in truth* unto David, he will not turn from it, Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. 12. If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony, that I shall teach them; their children also shall sit upon thy throne for evermore. 13. For the LORD hath chosen Zion: he hath desired *it* for his habitation. 14. This *is* my rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it. 15. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. 16. I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. 17. There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. 18. His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish.

These are precious promises, *confirmed by an oath*, that the heirs of them might have *strong consolation*, Heb. vi. 17, 18. It is all one whether we take them as pleas urged in the prayer, or as answers returned to the prayer; believers know how to make use of the promises both ways; with them to speak to God, and in them to hear what God the Lord will speak to us. These promises relate to the establishment both in church and state, both to the throne of the house of David, and to the testimony of Israel fixed on mount Zion: And the promises concerning Zion hill, are as applicable to the gospel church, as these concerning David's seed are to Christ; and therefore both pleadable by us, and very comfortable to us.

Here is, 1. The choice God made of David's house, and Zion hill. Both were of divine appointment.

(1.) God chose David's family for the royal family, and confirmed his choice by an oath, ver. 11, 12. David, being a type of Christ, was made king with an oath. *The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent*, will not turn from it. Did David swear to the Lord, that he would find him a house? ver. 2. the Lord swore to David that he would build him a house; for God will be behind with none of his people in affections or assurances. The promise made to David refers, 1. To a long succession of kings that should descend from his loins; *Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne*, which was fulfilled in Solomon; David himself lived to see it with great satisfaction, 1 Kings i. 48. The crown was also entailed conditionally upon his heirs for ever: *If thy children, in following ages, will keep my covenant, and my testimony that I shall teach them*; (God himself engageth to teach them, and he did his part) they had Moses and the prophets, and all he expects is that they should keep what he taught them, and keep to it, and then *their children shall sit upon thy throne for evermore*. Kings are before God, upon their good behaviour, and their commission from him runs *quam diu se bene gesserint*. The issue of this was, that they did not keep God's covenant, and so the entail was at length cut off, and *the sceptre departed from Judah* by degrees. 2. To an everlasting successor, a king that should descend from his loins, of *the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end*. St. Peter applies this to Christ, nay, he tells us, that David himself so understood it, Acts ii. 30. *He knew that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne*; and in the fulness of time he did so, and gave him the throne of his father David, Luke i. 32. He did fulfil the condition of the promise, he kept God's covenant and his testimony, did his Father's will, and in all things pleased him, and therefore to him, and his spiritual seed, the promise shall be made good, he and the children God has given him; all believers shall *sit upon the throne for evermore*, Rev. iii. 21.

(2.) God chose Zion hill for the holy hill, and confirmed his choice by the delight he took in it, ver. 13, 14. He chose the mount Zion which he loved, Psalm lxxviii. 68. he chose it for the habitation of his ark, and said of it, *This is my rest for ever*, and not my residence for a time, as Shiloh was. Zion was the city of David, he chose it for the royal city because God chose it for the holy city: God said, *Here will I dwell*, and therefore David said, *Here will I dwell*, for he stuck to his principle; *It is good for me to be near to God*. Zion must be here looked upon as a type of the gospel church, which is called mount Zion, Heb. xii. 18. and in it what is here said of Zion, has its full accomplishment. Zion was long since plowed as a field, but the church of Christ is *the house of the living God*, 1 Tim. iii. 15. and it is his *rest for ever*,

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and shall be blessed with his presence always, even to the end of the world. The delight God takes in his church, and the continuance of his presence with his church, is the comfort and joy of all its members.

2. The choice blessings God has in store for David's house, and Zion hill: Whom God chooseth he will bless.

(1.) God having chosen Zion hill, he promiseth to bless that, 1. With the blessings of the life that now is; for godliness hath the promise of them, ver. 15. The earth shall yield her increase; there where religion is set up, there shall be provision; and in blessing God will bless it, Psalm lxxvii. 6. he will surely and abundantly bless it. And a little provision, with an abundant blessing upon it, will be more serviceable, as well as more comfortable, than a great deal without that blessing. God's people have a special blessing upon common enjoyments, and that blessing puts a peculiar sweetness into them. Nay, the promise goes further; *I will satisfy her poor with bread*. Zion has her own poor to keep; and it is promised, that God will take care even of them. (1.) By his providence, they shall be kept from wanting, they shall have provision enough. If there be scarcity, the poor are the first that feel it, so that it is a sure sign of plenty if they have sufficient. Zion's power shall not want, for God has obliged all the sons of Zion to be charitable to the poor, according to their ability, and the church must take care that they be not neglected, Acts vi. 1. (2.) By his grace, they shall be kept from complaining; though they have but dry bread, yet they shall be satisfied. Zion's poor have of all others reason to be content with a little of this world, because they have better things prepared for them. And this may be understood spiritually of the provision that is made for the soul in the word and ordinances; God will abundantly bless that, for the nourishment of the new man, and satisfy the poor in spirit with the bread of life. What God sanctifies to us, we shall and may be satisfied with.

2. With the blessings of the life that is to come, things pertaining to godliness, ver. 16. which is an answer to the prayer, ver. 9. (1.) It was desired that the priests might be *clothed with righteousness*; it is here promised, that God will *clothe them with salvation*; not only save them, but make them and their administrations instrumental for the salvation of his people; they shall both *save themselves and those that hear them*, and add *those to the church that shall be saved*. Note, Whom God clothes with righteousness he will clothe with salvation; we must pray for righteousness, and then with it God will give salvation. (2.) It was desired that the saints might *shout for joy*; it is promised that they *shall shout aloud for joy*. God gives more than we ask, and when he gives salvation he will give an abundant joy.

(2.) God having chosen David's family, he here promiseth to bless that also with suitable blessings.

1. Growing power: *There in Zion will I make the horn of David to bud*, ver. 17. The royal dignity shall increase more and more, and constant additions be made to the lustre of it. Christ is the *horn of salvation*, noting a plentiful and powerful salvation, which God hath raised up and made to bud *in the house of his servant David*. David had promised to use his power for God's glory, to cut off the horns of the wicked, and to exalt the horns of the righteous, Psalm lxxv. ult. and in recompence for it, God here promises to make his horn to bud, for to them that have power and use it well, more shall be given.

2. Lasting honour: *I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed*. Thou wilt *light my candle*, Psalm xviii. 29. that lamp is likely to burn bright which God ordains. A lamp is a successor; for when a lamp is almost out, another may be lighted by it: It is a succession; for by this means David shall not want a man to stand before God. Christ is the lamp, and the light of the world.

3. Compleat victory. *His enemies, that have formed designs against him, will I clothe with shame*, when they shall see their designs baffled. Let the enemies of all good governors expect to be clothed with shame, and especially the enemies of the Lord Jesus, and his government, who shall rise in the great day to everlasting shame and contempt.

4. Universal prosperity. *Upon himself shall his crown flourish*, i. e. his government shall be more and more his honour. This was to have its full accomplishment in Jesus Christ, whose crown of honour and power shall never fade, nor the flowers of it wither. The crown of earthly princes *endure not to all generations*, Prov. xxvii. 24. but Christ's crown shall endure to all eternity, and the crowns reserved for his faithful subjects are such as *fade not away*.

P S A L M CXXXIII.

This psalm is a brief encomium of unity and brotherly love, which, if we did not see the miseries of discord among men, we would think needless; but we cannot say too much, it were well enough if we could say enough to persuade people to live together in peace. The conjecture some make is well enough of the kind, that David penned it upon occasion of the union between the tribes, when they all met unanimously to make him king. It is a psalm of general use to all societies, lesser and larger, civil and sacred. Here is, 1. The doctrine laid down of the happiness of brotherly love, ver. 1.

2. *The illustration of that doctrine in two similitudes, ver. 2, 3.*
 3. *The proof of it in a good reason given for it, ver. 3. and then we are left to make the application, which we ought to do in singing of it, provoking our selves, and one another, to holy love. The contents of this psalm in our bibles is short, but very proper; it is the benefit of the communion of saints.*

¶ A song of degrees of David.

1. **B**Ehold how good and how pleasant *it is*, for brethren to dwell together in unity. 2. *It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aarons beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments.* 3. *As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.*

Here see, 1. What it is that is commanded: *Brethren's dwelling together in unity*; not only not quarrelling and devouring one another, but delighting in each other with mutual endearments, and promoting each other's welfare with mutual services. Sometimes it is chosen, as the best expedient for preserving peace, that brethren should live asunder, and at a distance from each other; that indeed may prevent enmity and strife, Gen. xiii. 9. but the goodness and pleasantness *is, for brethren to dwell together, and so to dwell in unity: To dwell even as one*, so some read it; as having one heart, one soul, one interest. David had many sons by many wives; probably, David penned this psalm for their instruction, to engage them to love one another; which if they had done, much of the mischief that arose in his family had been happily prevented. The tribes of Israel had long had separate interests, during the government of the Judges, and it was often of ill consequence: but now they were united under one common head, he would have them sensible how much it was likely to be for their advantage; especially, since now the ark was fixed, and with it the place of their rendezvous for publick worship, and the centre of their unity. Now let them live in love.

2. How commendable it is. *Behold how good and how pleasant it is.* It is good in itself, agreeable to the will of God, the conformity of earth to heaven. It is good for us, for our honour and comfort; it is pleasant and pleasing to God, and all good men; it brings constant delight to those who do thus live in unity. *Behold how good!* we cannot conceive or express the goodness and pleasantness of it. *Behold it as a rare thing, and therefore admirable: Behold and wonder that there should be so much goodness and pleasantness among men, so much of heaven on this earth! Behold it as an amiable thing, which will attract our hearts: Behold it as an exemplary thing, which where it is, is to be imitated by us with a holy emulation.*

3. How the pleasantness of it is illustrated. (1.) It is fragrant, as the holy anointing oil, which was strongly perfumed, and diffused its odours to the great delight of all the by-standers, when it was poured upon the head of Aaron, or his successor, the high priest, so plentifully that it ran down the face, even to the collar or binding of the garment, ver. 2. 1. This was holy ointment, so must our brotherly love be, with a pure heart, devoted to God. We must love them that are begotten, *for his sake that begat*, 1 John v. 1. 2. This ointment was a composition made up by a divine dispensatory, God appointed the ingredients, and the quantities. Thus believers are *taught of God to love one another*; it is a grace of his working in us. 3. It was very precious, and the like to it was not to be made for any common use. Thus holy love is in the sight of God of great price; and that is precious indeed which is so in God's sight. 4. It was grateful, both to Aaron himself, and to all about him; so is holy love; it is like *ointment and perfume which rejoice the heart*. Christ's love to mankind was part of that *oil of gladness*, with which he was *anointed above his fellows*. 5. Aaron and his sons were not admitted to minister unto the Lord, till they were anointed with this ointment, nor are our services acceptable to God without this holy love; if we have it not, we are nothing, 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2.

(2.) It is fruitifying; it is profitable as well as pleasing: It is *as the dew*; it brings abundance of blessings along with it, as numerous as the drops of dew. It cools the scorching heat of mens passions, as the evening dews cool the air, and refresh the earth. It contributes very much to our fruitfulness in every thing that is good, it moistens the heart and makes it tender, and fit to receive the good seed of the word; as, on the contrary, *malice and bitterness* disfit us to receive it, 1 Pet. ii. 1. It is *as the dew of Hermon*, a common hill; for brotherly love is the beauty and benefit of civil societies; *and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion*, a holy hill, for it contributes greatly to the fruitfulness of sacred societies: Both Hermon and Zion will wither without this dew. It is said of the dew, that it *tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men*, Mich. v. 7. Nor should our love to our brethren stay for theirs to us, that is publican's love; but should prevent it, that is divine love.

4. The proof of the excellency of brotherly love: Loving people are blessed people. For,

(1.) They are blessed of God, and therefore blessed indeed. There, where brethren dwell together in unity, *the Lord commands the blessing*, a complicated blessing, including all blessings. It is God's prerogative to command the blessing, man can but beg a blessing. Blessings according to the promise are commanded blessings, for he hath commanded *his covenant for ever*: Blessings that take effect are commanded blessings, for *he speaks and it is done*.

(2.) They are everlastingly blessed. The blessing which God commands on them that dwell in love, is *life for evermore*; that is the blessing of blessings. They that dwell in love, not only dwell in God, but do already dwell in heaven. As the perfection of love is the blessedness of heaven, so the sincerity of love is the earnest of that blessedness. They that live in love and peace, the God of love and peace shall be with them now, and they shall be with him shortly, with him for ever, in the world of endless love and peace. How good then is it, and how pleasant!

P S A L M CXXXIV.

This is the last of the fifteen songs of degrees; and if they were at any time sung all together in the temple service, it is fitly made the conclusion of them, for the design of it is to stir up the ministers to go on with their work in the night, when the solemnities of the day were over. Some make this psalm to be a dialogue. 1. In the two first verses the priests or Levites that sat up all night to keep the watch of the house of the Lord, are called upon to spend their time while they were upon the guard, not in idle talk, but in the acts of devotion. 2. In the last verse they that were thus called upon to praise God, pray for him that gave them the exhortation, either the high priest, or the captain of the guard. Or thus; they who did that service did mutually exhort one another, and pray for one another. In singing this psalm we must both stir up ourselves to give glory to God, and encourage ourselves to hope for mercy and grace from him.

¶ A song of degrees.

1. **B**Ehold, bless ye the LORD, all ye servants of the LORD, which by night stand in the house of the LORD. 2. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary: and bless the LORD. 3. The LORD that made heaven and earth, bless thee out of Zion.

This psalm instructs us concerning a twofold blessing:

1. Our blessing God; that is, speaking well of him, which here we are taught to do, ver. 1, 2.

(1.) It is a call to the Levites to do it: they were *the servants of the Lord* by office, appointed to minister in holy things; they attended the sanctuary, and kept the charge of the house of the Lord, Numb. iii. 6, &c. Some of them did *by night stand in the house of the Lord*, to guard the holy things of the temple, that they might not be profaned, and the rich things of the temple, that they might not be plundered. While the ark was in curtains, there was the more need of guards upon it. They attended likewise to see that neither the fire on the altar, nor the lamps in the candlestick went out. Probably, it was usual for some devout and pious Israelites to sit up with them; we read of one that *departed not from the temple night or day*, Luke ii. 37. Now these are here called upon to *bless the Lord*. Thus they must keep themselves awake by keeping themselves employed; thus they must redeem time for holy exercises: and how can we spend our time better than in praising God? It would be an excellent piece of good husbandry, to fill up the vacancies of time with pious meditations and ejaculations; and surely it is a very modest and reasonable demand to converse with God when we have nothing else to do. They that stood *in the house of the Lord*, must remember where they were, and that holiness, and holy work, became that house: Let them therefore *bless the Lord*; let them all do it in comfort, or each by himself; let them *lift up their hands* in the doing of it, in token of their lifting up of their hearts. *Let them lift up their hands in holiness*, so Dr. Hammond reads it; or in sanctification; as it is fit when they lift them up *in the sanctuary*; and let them remember, that when they were appointed to wash before they went in to minister, they were thereby taught to *lift up holy hands* in prayer and praise.

(2.) It is a call to us to do it, who, as christians, are made priests to our God, and Levites, Isa. lxvi. 21. we are the *servants of the Lord*, we have a place and a name in his house, in his sanctuary, we stand before him to minister to him, even by night we are under his eye, and have access to him: Let us therefore *bless the Lord*, and again bless him; think and speak of his glory and goodness; let us *lift up our hands* in prayer, in praise, in vows; let us do our work with diligence and cheerfulness, and an elevation of mind. This exhortation is ushered in with *Behold!* a note commanding attention: Look about you, Sirs, when you are in God's presence, and carry your selves accordingly.

2. God's blessing us, and that is doing well for us, which we are here taught to desire, ver. 3. Whether it is the watchmens blessing their captain, or the Levites blessing the high priest, or whoever was their chief, as many take it, because it is in the singular

gular number, *The Lord bless thee*; or whether the blessing is pronounced by one upon many, *The Lord bless thee*, i. e. each of you in particular, thee and thee; you that are blessing God, the Lord bless you; is not material: We may learn, 1. That we need desire no more to make us happy, than to be blessed of the Lord, for those whom he blest they are blessed indeed. 2. That blessings out of Zion, spiritual blessings, the blessings of the covenant, and of communion with God, are the best blessings, which we should be most earnest for. 3. It is a great encouragement to us when we come to God for a blessing, that it is he *that made heaven and earth*, and therefore has all the blessings of both at his dispose, of the upper and nether springs. 4. We ought to beg these blessings not only for ourselves, but for others also; not only the Lord bless me, but the Lord bless thee; thus testifying our belief of the fulness of divine blessings, that there is enough for others as well as for us, and our good-will also to others. Those that exhort us, we must pray for them. Though *the less is blessed of the greater*, Heb. vii. 7. yet the greater must be prayed for by the less.

P S A L M CXXXV.

This is one of the Hallelujah psalms; that is the title of it, and that is the Amen of it, both its alpha and its omega. (1.) It begins with a call to praise God, particularly a call to the servants of the Lord to praise him, as in the foregoing psalm, ver. 1.—3. (2.) It goes on to furnish us with matter for praise. God is to be praised, 1. As the God of Jacob, ver. 4. 2. As the God of gods, ver. 5. 3. As the God of the whole world, ver. 6, 7. 4. As a terrible God to the enemies of Israel, ver. 8.—11. 5. As a gracious God to Israel, both in what he had done for them, and what he would do, ver. 12.—14. 6. As the only living God, all other gods being vanity and a lie, ver. 15.—18. (3.) It concludes with another exhortation to all persons concerned to praise God, ver. 19.—21. In singing this psalm, our hearts must be filled, as well as our mouths, with the high praises of God.

1. **P**RAISE ye the LORD, praise ye the name of the LORD, praise him, O ye servants of the LORD. 2. Ye that stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God. 3. Praise ye the LORD, for the LORD is good: sing praises unto his name, for it is pleasant. 4. For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure.

Here is, 1. The duty we are called to; to *praise the Lord*, to *praise his name*; *praise him*, and again *praise him*. We must not only thank him for what he has done for us, but praise him for what he is in himself, and has done for others: Take all occasions to speak well of God, and to give his truths and ways a good word.

2. The persons that are called upon to do this: the *servants of the Lord*, the priests and Levites that stand in his house, and all the devout and pious Israelites that stand in the courts of his house to worship there, ver. 2. They have most reason to praise God that are admitted to the privileges of his house; and they see most reason that there behold his beauty, and taste his bounty: from them it is expected, for to that end they enjoy their places: Who should praise him if they do not?

3. The reasons why we should praise God.

(1.) Because he whom we are to praise is good; and goodness is that which every body will speak well of. He is good to all, and we must give him the praise of that; his goodness is his glory, and we must make mention of it to his glory.

(2.) Because the work is its own wages. *Sing praises to his name, for it is pleasant*: It is best done with a cheerful spirit, and we shall have the pleasure of having done our duty. It is a heaven upon earth to be praising God; and the pleasure of that should quite put our mouths out of taste to the pleasures of sin.

(3.) Because of the peculiar privileges of God's people, ver. 4. *The Lord hath chosen Jacob to himself*, and therefore Jacob is bound to praise him; for therefore God chose a people to himself, that they might be unto him *for a name and a praise*, Jer. xiii. 11. and therefore Jacob has abundant matter for praise, being thus dignified and distinguished. *Israel is God's peculiar treasure* above all people, *Exod. xix. 5.* they are his *Segullah*, a people appropriated to him, and that he has a delight in, *precious in his sight, and honourable*. For this distinguishing, surprizing favour, if the seed of Jacob do not praise him, they are the most unworthy, ungrateful people under the sun.

5. For I know that the LORD is great, and that our LORD is above all gods. 6. Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places. 7. He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth, he maketh lightnings for the rain: he bringeth the wind out of his treasuries. 8. Who smote the first-born of Egypt, both of man and beast. 9. Who sent tokens and

wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants. 10. Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings: 11. Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan: 12. And gave their land for an heritage, an heritage unto Israel his people. 13. Thy name, O LORD, endureth for ever, and thy memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations. 14. For the LORD will judge his people, and he will repent himself concerning his servants.

The psalmist had suggested to us the goodness of God, as the proper matter of our cheerful praises; here he suggests to us the greatness of God, as the proper matter of our awful praises; and on this he is most large, because this we are less forward to consider.

1. He asserts the doctrine of God's greatness, ver. 5. *The Lord is great*; great indeed, who knows no limits of time or place! He asserts it with assurance, I know that he is so; know it not only by observation of the proofs of it, but by belief of the revelation of it. I know it, i. e. I am sure of it, I know it by my own experience of the divine greatness working on my soul. He asserts it with an holy defiance of all pretenders, tho' they should join in confederacy against him; he is not only above any God, but above all Gods, infinitely above them, betwixt him and them there is no comparison.

2. He proves him to be a great God, by the greatness of his power, ver. 6. (1.) He hath an absolute power, and may do what he will: *Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he*, and none could control him, or say unto him, what dost thou? He doth what he pleaseth because he pleaseth, and giveth not account of any of his matters. (2.) He hath an almighty power, and can do what he will; if he will work, none shall hinder. (3.) This absolute almighty power is of universal extent; he doth what he will in heaven, in earth, in the seas, and in all the deep places that are in the bottom of the sea or the bowels of the earth. The Gods of the heathen can do nothing; but our God can do any thing, and doth do every thing.

3. He gives instances of his great power.

(1.) In the kingdom of nature, ver. 7. All the powers of nature prove the greatness of the God of nature, from whom they are derived, and on whom they depend. The chain of natural causes was not only framed by him at first, but is still preserved by him. 1. It is by his power that exhalations are drawn up from the terraqueous globe: The heat of the sun raiseth them, but it has that power from God, and therefore it is given as an instance of the glory of God, that *nothing is hid from the heat of the sun*, Psal. xix. 6. *He causeth the vapours to ascend*, not only unhelped, but unseen by us, from the earth, from the ends of the earth, i. e. from the seas, by which the earth is surrounded. 2. It is he, that out of those vapours, so raised, forms the rain, so that the earth is no loser by the vapours it sends up, for they are returned with advantage into fruitful showers. 3. Out of the same vapours (such is his wonderful power) he *maketh lightnings for the rain*; by them he opens the bottles of heaven, and shakes the clouds, that they may water the earth. Here is fire and water thoroughly reconciled by divine omnipotence: They come together, and yet the water doth not quench the fire, nor the fire lick up the water, as fire from heaven did when God pleased, 1 Kings xviii. 38. 4. The same exhalations, to serve another purpose, are converted into winds, which blow where they list, from what point of the compass they will, and we are so far from directing them, that we cannot tell whence they come or whither they go, but God *brings them out of his treasures*, with as much exactness and design, as a prudent prince orders money to issue out of his exchequer.

(2.) In the kingdoms of men; and here he instanceth in the great things God had formerly done for his people Israel, which were proofs of God's greatness as well as of his goodness, and confirmations of the truth of the scriptures of the Old Testament, which began to be written by Moses, the person employed in working those miracles. Observe God's sovereign dominion, and irresistible power, 1. In bringing Israel out of Egypt, humbling Pharaoh by many plagues, and so forcing him to let them go. These plagues are called tokens and wonders, because they came not in the common course of providence, but there was something miraculous in each of them: They were sent upon Pharaoh and all his servants, i. e. his subjects; but the Israelites, whom God claimed for his servants, his sons, his first-born, his free-born, were exempted from them, and no plague came nigh their dwelling. The death of the first-born both of men and cattle, was the heaviest of all the plagues, and that which gained the point. 2. In destroying the kingdoms of Canaan before them, ver. 10. They that were in possession of the land design'd for Israel, had all possible advantages for keeping possession; the people were numerous, and warlike, and confederate against Israel; they were great nations: Yet if a great nation has a meek and mean-spirited prince, it lies exposed; but these great nations had mighty kings, and yet they

they were all smitten and slain; *Sihon*, and *Og*, and *all the kings of Canaan*, ver. 10, 11. No power of hell or earth can prevent the accomplishment of the promise of God, when the time, the set time for it is come. 3. In settling them in the land of promise. He that gives kingdoms to whomsoever he pleaseth, gave Canaan to be an heritage to Israel his people: It came to them by inheritance, for their ancestors had the promise of it, though not the possession; and it descended as an inheritance to their seed. This was done long before, yet God is now praised for it; and good reason, for the children were now enjoying the benefit of it.

4. He triumphs in the perpetuity of God's glory and grace. (1.) Of his glory, ver. 13. *Thy name, O God, endures for ever.* God's manifestations of himself to his people have everlasting fruits and consequences: *What God doth, it shall be for ever*, Eccl. iii. 14. His name endureth for ever in the constant and everlasting praises of his people; his memorial endures, has endured hitherto, and shall still endure, throughout all generations of the church. This seems to refer to *Exod. iii. 15.* where, when God had called himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he adds, *This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.* God is, and will be always the same to his church, a gracious, faithful, wonder-working God; and his church is, and will be the same to him, a thankful, praising people; and thus his name *endures for ever.* (2.) Of his grace; he will be kind to his people. 1. He will plead their cause against others that contend with them; he will judge his people, *i. e.* he will judge for them, and will not suffer them to be run down. 2. He will not himself contend for ever with them, but will repent himself concerning his servants, and not proceed in his controversy with them; he will be intreated for them, or he will be comforted concerning them, *i. e.* he will return in ways of mercy to them, and will delight to do them good. This verse is taken from the song of Moses, *Deut. xxxii. 36.*

15. The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of mens hands. 16. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not. 17. They have ears, but they hear not; neither is there any breath in their mouths. 18. They that make them are like unto them: *so is every one that trusteth in them.* 19. Bless the LORD, O house of Israel: bless the LORD, O house of Aaron. 20. Bless the LORD, O house of Levi; ye that fear the LORD, bless the LORD. 21. Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, which dwelleth at Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.

The design of these verses is,

1. To arm the people of God against idolatry and all false worship, by shewing what sort of gods they were that the heathen worshipped, as we had it before, *Psal. cxv. 4, &c.* (1.) They were gods of their own making; being so, they could have no power but what their makers gave them; and then, what power could their makers receive from them? The images were the *work of mens hands*, and the deities that were supposed to inform them were as much the creatures of mens fancy and imagination. (2.) They had the shape of animals, but could not perform the least act, no not of the animal life. They could neither see, nor hear, nor speak, nor so much as breathe; and therefore to make them with eyes, and ears, and mouths, and nostrils, was such a jest, as that one would wonder how reasonable creatures could suffer themselves to be so imposed upon, as to expect any good from such mock deities. (3.) Their worshippers were therefore as stupid and senseless as they were; both those that made them to be worshipped, and those that trusted in them when they were made, ver. 18. The worshipping of such gods as were the objects of sense, and senseless, made the worshippers sensual and senseless. Let our worshipping of a God that is a Spirit make us spiritual and wise.

2. To stir up the people of God to true devotion in the worship of the true God, ver. 19, 20, 21. The more deplorable the condition of the Gentile nations is that worship idols, the more are we bound to thank God that we know better things. Therefore, 1. Let us set ourselves about the acts of devotion, and employ ourselves in them; *Bless the Lord*, and again, and again, *bless the Lord*. In the parallel place, *Psal. cxv. 9, 10, 11.* by way of inference, from the impotency of idols, the duty thus pressed upon us, is, to *trust in the Lord*; here, to *bless him*; by putting our trust in God we give glory to him, and they that depend upon God shall not want matter of thanksgiving to him. All persons that knew God are here called to praise him. The *house of Israel*, the nation in general; the *house of Aaron*, and the *house of Levi*, the Lord's ministers that attended in his sanctuary; and all others that *feared the Lord*, though they were not of the house of Israel. 2. Let God have the glory of all, *blessed be the Lord*. The tribute of praise ariseth out of Zion, all God's works do praise him, but his saints bless him; and they need not go far to pay their tribute, for he *dwelleth in Jerusalem*, in his church, which they are members of, so that he is always nigh unto them to receive their homage.

And the condescensions of his grace in dwelling with men upon the earth, call for our grateful and thankful returns, and our repeated Hallelujahs.

P S A L M CXXXVI.

The scope of this psalm is the same with that of the foregoing psalm, but there is something very singular in the composition of it; for the latter half of each verse is the same repeated throughout the psalm, for his mercy endureth for ever, and yet no vain repetition. It is allowed that such burthens or keepings, as we call them, add very much to the beauty of a song, and help to make it moving and affecting; nor can any verse contain more weighty matter, or more worthy to be thus repeated than this, that God's mercy endureth for ever; and the repetition of it here twenty-six times intimates, 1. That God's mercies to his people are thus repeated and drawn, as it were, with a continuando from the beginning to the end, with a progress and advance in infinitum. 2. That in every particular favour we ought to take notice of the mercy of God, and to take notice of it as enduring still, the same now that it has been, and enduring for ever, the same always that it is. 3. That the everlasting continuance of the mercy of God is very much his honour, and that which he glories in, and very much the saints comfort, and that which they glory in. It is that which therefore our hearts should be full of, and greatly affected with, so as that the most frequent mention of it, instead of cloying us, should raise us the more, because it will be the subject of our praise to all eternity. This most excellent sentence, that God's mercy endureth for ever, is magnified above all the truths concerning God, not only by the repetition of it here, but by the signal tokens of divine acceptance, with which God owned the singing of it both in Solomon's time, 2 Chron. v. 13. when they sang these words, for his mercy endureth for ever, the house was filled with a cloud; and in Jehoshaphat's time, when they sang these words God gave them victory, 2 Chron. xx. 21, 22. which should make us love to sing, His mercies sure do still endure, eternally. We must praise God, (1.) As great and good in himself, ver. 1, — 3. (2.) As the Creator of the world, ver. 5, — 9. (3.) As Israel's God and Saviour, ver. 10, — 22. (4.) As our Redeemer, ver. 23, 24. (5.) As the great Benefactor of the whole creation, and God over all blessed for evermore, ver. 25, 26.

Give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. 2. O Give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever. 3. O give thanks to the LORD of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever. 4. To him who alone doth great wonders: for his mercy endureth for ever. 5. To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy endureth for ever. 6. To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy endureth for ever. 7. To him that made great lights: for his mercy endureth for ever. 8. The sun to rule by day: for his mercy endureth for ever. 9. The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever.

The duty we are here again and again called to, is to give thanks, to offer the sacrifice of praise continually, not the fruits of our ground or cattle, but the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name, Heb. xiii. 15. We are never so earnestly called upon to pray and repent, as to give thanks; for it is the will of God that we should abound most in the most pleasant exercises of religion, in that which is the work of heaven.

Now here observe,

1. Whom we must give thanks to, to him that we receive all good from, to the Lord, Jehovah, Israel's God, ver. 1. the God of gods, the God whom angels adore, from whom magistrates derive their power, and by whom all pretended deities are and shall be conquered, ver. 2. to the Lord of lords, the Sovereign of all sovereigns, the Stay and Supporter of all supports, ver. 3. In all our adorations we must have an eye to God's excellency as transcendent, and to his power and dominion as uncontestably and uncontrollably supreme.

2. What we must give thanks for; not as the Pharisee that made all his thanksgivings terminate in his own praise, *God, I thank thee*, that I am so and so, but directing them all to God's glory.

1. We must give thanks to God for his goodness and mercy, ver. 1. Give thanks to the Lord, not only because he doth good, but because he is good, all the streams must be run up to the fountain, not only because he is merciful to us, but because his mercy endures for ever, and will be drawn out to those that shall come after us. We must give thanks to God, not only for that mercy which is now handed out to us here on earth, but for that which shall endure for ever in the glories and joys of heaven.

2. We must give God thanks for the instances of his power and wisdom. In general, ver. 4. he alone doth great wonders. The contrivance is wonderful, the design being laid by infinite wisdom; the performance wonderful, being put in execution by infinite

infinite power. He alone doth marvellous things, *i. e.* None but he can do such things, and he doth them without the assistance or advice of any other.

More particularly, 1. He made the heavens, and stretched them out, and in them we not only see his wisdom and power, but we taste his mercy in their benign influences; as long as the heavens endure. The mercy of God endures in them, *ver.* 5. 2. He raised the earth out of the waters, when he caused the dry land to appear, that it might be fit to be a habitation for man, and therein also his mercy to man still endures, *ver.* 6. for *the earth hath he given to the children of men*, and all its products. 3. Having made both heaven and earth, he settled a correspondence between them, notwithstanding their distance, by making the sun, moon and stars, which he placed in the firmament of heaven, to shed their light and influences upon this earth, *ver.* 7, 8, 9. These are called the great lights, because they appear so to us, for otherwise astronomers tell us, that the moon is less than many of the stars, but being nearer to the earth it seems much bigger. They are said to rule, not only because they govern the seasons of the year, but because they are useful to the world, and benefactors are the best rulers, *Luke* xxii. 5. But the empire is divided, one *rules by day*, the other *by night*, at least *the stars*, and yet all are subject to God's direction and dispose. Those rulers which the Gentiles therefore idolized, are the world's servants, and God's subjects; *Sun stand thou still, and then moon.*

10. To him that smote Egypt in their first-born: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. 11. And brought out Israel from among them: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. 12. With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. 13. To him which divided the Red sea into parts: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. 14. And made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. 15. But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. 16. To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. 17. To him which smote great kings: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. 18. And slew famous kings: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. 19. Sihon, king of the Amorites: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. 20. And Og, the king of Bashan: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. 21. And gave their land for an heritage: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. 22. *Even* an heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

The great things God did for Israel, when he first formed them into a people, and set up his kingdom among them, are here mentioned as often elsewhere in the Psalms, as instances, both of the power of God, and of the particular kindness he had for Israel. See *Psal.* cxxxv. 8, &c.

1. He brought them out of Egypt, *ver.* 10, 11, 12. That was a mercy which endured long to them, and our redemption by Christ, which was typified by that, doth indeed endure for ever, for it is an eternal redemption. Of all the plagues of Egypt, none is mentioned but the death of the first-born, because that was the conquering plague; by that, God, who in all the plagues distinguished the Israelites from the Egyptians, brought them at last from among them; not by a wile, but with a strong hand, and an arm stretched out to reach far, and do great things. These miracles of mercy, as they proved Moses's commission to give law to Israel, so they laid Israel under lasting obligations to obey that law, *Exod.* xx. 2.

2. He forced them a way through the Red-sea, which obstructed them at their first setting out. By the power he has to control the common course of nature, he *divided the sea into two parts*, between which he opened a path, and made Israel to pass between the parts, now they were to enter into covenant with him (see *Jer.* xxxiv. 18.) He not only divided the sea, but gave his people courage to go through it when it was divided; which was an instance of God's power over men's hearts, as the former of his power over the waters. And to make it a miracle of justice as well as mercy, the same Red-sea that was a lane to the Israelites, was a grave to their pursuers. There he shook off Pharaoh and his host.

3. He conducted them through a vast howling wilderness, *ver.* 16. there he led them and fed them; their camp was victualled and fortified by a constant series of miracles for forty years; though they loitered and wandered there they were not lost. And in this the mercy of God, and the constancy of that mercy, was the more observable, because they oft provoked him in the wilderness, and grieved him in the desert.

He destroyed kings before them to make room for them, *ver.* 17, 18. not deposed and banished them; but smote and slew them, in which appeared his wrath against them; but his mercy, is never-failing mercy to Israel. And that which magnified it, No. 47.

was, that they were *great kings*, and *famous kings*, yet God subdued them as easily as if they had been the least, and weakest, and meanest of the children of men. They were wicked kings, and then their grandeur and lustre would not secure them from the justice of God. The more great and famous they were, the more did God's mercy to Israel appear in *giving such kings* for them. Sihon and Og are particularly mentioned, because they were the two first that were conquered on the other side Jordan, *ver.* 19, 20. It is good to enter into the detail of God's favours, and not to view them in the gross; and in each instance to observe and own, that God's *mercy endureth for ever*.

5. He put them in possession of a good land, *ver.* 21, 22. He, whose the earth is, and the fulness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein, took land from one people, and gave it to another as pleased him. The *iniquity of the Amorites was now full*, and therefore it was taken from them, *Israel was his servant*, and though they had been provoking in the wilderness, yet he intended to have some service out of them, for *to them pertained the service of God*. As he said to the Egyptians, *Let my people go*, so to the Canaanites, *let my people in*, that they may serve me. In this God's *mercy to them endureth for ever*, because it was a figure of the heavenly Canaan, the *mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life*.

23. Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. 24. And hath redeemed us from our enemies: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. 25. Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. 26. O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

God's everlasting mercy is here celebrated,

1. In the redemption of his church, *ver.* 23, 24. In the many redemptions wrought for the Jewish church, out of the hands of their oppressors; when in the years of their servitude their estate was very low, God remembered them, and raised them up saviours, the judges, and David at length, by whom God gave them rest from all their enemies: But especially, in the great redemption of the universal church, of which these were types, we have a great deal of reason to say, *He remembered us*, the children of men, *in our low estate*, in our lost estate, *for his mercy endureth for ever*: And sent his Son to redeem us from sin, and death, and hell, and all our spiritual enemies; *for his mercy endureth for ever*; us, and not the angels that sinned; for his mercy *endureth for ever*.

2. In the provision he makes for all the creatures, *ver.* 25. *He gives food to all flesh*. It is an instance of the mercy of God's providence, that wherever he has given life, he gives food agreeable, and sufficient; and he is a good housekeeper, that provides for so large a family.

3. In all his glories, and all his gifts, *ver.* 26. *Give thanks to the God of heaven*; that speaks him a glorious God, and the glory of his mercy is to be taken notice of in our praises; the riches of his glory are displayed in the vessels of his mercy, *Rom.* ix. 23. And it speaks him the great benefactor, *for every good and perfect gift is from above*, from the Father of lights, the *God of heaven*; and we should trace every stream to the fountain; this and that particular mercy, may, perhaps, endure but a while, but the mercy that is in God *endures for ever*; it is an inexhaustible fountain.

P S A L M CXXXVII.

There are divers psalms which are thought to have been penned in the latter days of the Jewish church, when prophecy was near expiring, and the canon of the Old Testament ready to be closed up; but none of them appears so plainly to be of a late date, as this here, which was penned when the people of God were captives in Babylon, and there insulted over by their proud oppressors; probably, it was towards the latter end of their captivity; for now they saw the destruction of Babylon hastening on apace, *ver.* 8. which would be their discharge. It is a mournful psalm, a lamentation; and the Septuagint make it one of the lamentations of Jeremiah, naming him for the author of it. Here 1. The melancholy captives cannot enjoy themselves, *ver.* 1, 2. 2. They cannot humour their proud oppressors, *ver.* 3, 4. 3. They cannot forget Jerusalem, *ver.* 5, 6. 4. They cannot forgive Edom and Babylon, *ver.* 7, 8, 9. In singing this psalm, we must be much affected with the concerns of the church, especially that part of it that is in affliction, laying the sorrows of God's people near our hearts, comforting ourselves in the prospect of the deliverance of the church, and the ruin of its enemies in due time, but carefully avoiding all personal animosities, and not mixing the leaven of malice with our sacrifices.

BY the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea we wept, when we remembered Zion. 2. We hanged our harps upon the willows, in the midst thereof, 17 H

thereof. 3. For there they that carried us away captive, required of us a song; and they that wasted us, required of us, mirth, saying, sing us one of the songs of Zion. 4. How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land? 5. If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget *her cunning*. 6. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

We have here the daughter of Zion covered with a cloud, and dwelling with the daughter of Babylon; the people of God in tears, but fowing in tears: Observe,

1. The mournful posture they were in; their affairs were so, and so were their spirits.

(1.) They were posted *by the rivers of Babylon*, in a strange land, a great way off of their own country, whence they were brought as prisoners of war; the land of Babylon was now a house of bondage to that people, as Egypt had been in their beginning. Their conquerors quartered them *by the rivers*, with design to employ them there, and keep them to work in their galleys; or perhaps they chose it as the most melancholy place, and therefore most suitable to their sorrowful spirits. If they must build houses there, *Jer. xxix. 5.* it shall not be in the cities, the places of concourse, but by the rivers, the places of solitude, where they might mingle their tears with the streams. We find some of them by the river Chebar, *Ezek. i. 3.* others by the river Ulai, *Dan. viii. 2.*

(2.) There they *sat down* to indulge their grief by poring on their miseries. Jeremiah had taught them under this yoke to *sit alone*, and *keep silence*, and *put their mouths in the dust*, *Lam. iii. 28, 29.* We *sat down*, as those that expected to stay, and were content since it is the will of God it must be so.

(3.) Thoughts of Zion drew tears from their eyes; and it was not a sudden passion of weeping, such as we are sometimes put into by a trouble that surprizeth us, but they were deliberate tears, we *sat down and wept*; tears with consideration: We *wept when we remembered Zion*, the holy hill on which the temple was built; their affection to God's house swallowed up their concern for their own houses. They remembered Zion's former glory, and the satisfaction they had had in Zion's courts, *Lam. i. 7.* *Jerusalem remembered in the days of her misery, all her pleasant things which she had in the days of old*, *Psal. xlii. 4.* They remembered Zion's present desolations, and *favoured the dust thereof*, which was a good sign that the time for God to favour it was not far off, *Psal. cii. 13, 14.*

(4.) They laid by their instruments of musick, *ver. 2.* *We hanged our harps upon the willows.* 1. The harps they used for their own diversion and entertainment; these they laid aside, both because it was their judgment that they ought not to use them now God called to weeping and mourning, *Isa. xxii. 12.* and their spirits were so sad, that they had no hearts to use them; they brought their harps with them, designing, perhaps, to use them for the alleviating of their grief, but it proved so great that it would not admit the experiment; musick makes some people melancholy; *As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs to a heavy heart.* 2. The harps they used in God's worship, the Levites harps; these they did not throw away, being in hopes they might yet again have occasion to use them, but they threw them by, because they had no present use for them; God has cut them out other work, by *turning their feasting into mourning, and their songs into lamentations*, *Amos viii. 10.* Every thing is beautiful in its season. They did not hide their harps in the bushes, or the hollows of the rocks; but hung them up in view, that the sight of them might affect them with this deplorable change. Yet perhaps, they were faulty in doing this; for praising God is never out of season, it is his will that we should *in every thing give thanks*, *Isa. xxiv. 15, 16.*

2. The abuses which their enemies put upon them, when they were in this melancholy condition, *ver. 3.* They had *carried them away captive* from their own land, and then *wasted them* in the land of their captivity; took what little they had from them; but this was not enough, to compleat their woes they insulted over them, they *required of us mirth and a song*. Now, (1.) This was very barbarous and inhuman; even an enemy in misery is to be pitied, and not trampled upon. It argues a base and fordid spirit to upbraid those that are in distress, either with their former joys, or with their present griefs, or to challenge those to be merry, who we know are out of tune for it; this is adding affliction to the afflicted. (2.) It was very profane and impious; no songs would serve them but the *songs of Zion* with which God had been honoured; so that in this demand they reflected upon God himself; as Belshazzar, when he drunk wine in temple-bowls. Their enemies *mocked at their sabbaths*, *Lam. i. 7.*

3. The patience wherewith they bore their abuses, *ver. 4.* They had laid by their harps, and would not resume them, no, not to ingratiate themselves with those at whose mercy they lay; would not answer those fools according to their folly. Profane scoffers are not to be humoured, nor pearls cast before swine; David prudently *kept silence even from good*, when the *wicked were*

before him, who he knew would ridicule what he said, and make a jest of it, *Psal. xxxix. 1, 2.* The reason they gave is very mild and pious: *How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?* They do not say, *How shall we sing when we are so much in sorrow?* if that had been all, they might, perhaps, have put a force upon themselves, so far as to oblige their masters with a song: but it is *the Lord's song*, it is a sacred thing, it is peculiar to the temple service, and therefore we dare not sing it in the land of a stranger, among idolaters. We must not serve common mirth, much less profane mirth, with any thing that is appropriated to God, who is sometimes to be honoured by a religious silence, as well as by religious speaking.

4. The constant affection they retained for Jerusalem, the city of their solemnities, even now they were in Babylon. Though their enemies banter them for talking so much of Jerusalem, and even doting upon it, their love to it is not in the least abated; it is what they may be jeered for, but will never be jeered out of, *ver. 5, 6.* Observe, 1. How these pious captives stood affected to Jerusalem: (1.) Their heads were full of it; it was always in their minds, they remembered it, they did not forget it, though they had been long absent from it; many of them had never seen it, nor knew any thing of it but by report, and by what they had read in the scripture, yet it was graven upon the palms of their hands, and even its ruins were continually before them, which was an evidence of their faith in the promise of its restoration in due time. In their daily prayers they opened their windows towards Jerusalem, and how then could they forget it? (2.) Their hearts were full of it; they *preferred it above their chief joy*, and therefore they remembered it, and could not forget it. What we love, we love to think of. They that rejoice in God, do for his sake make Jerusalem their joy, and prefer it before that, whatever it is, which is the head of their joy, *i. e.* which is dearest to them in this world. A godly man will prefer a publick good before any private satisfaction or gratification whatsoever.

2. How stedfastly they resolved to keep up this affection, which they express by a solemn imprecation of mischief to themselves if they should let it fall: Let me be for ever disabled either to sing or play on the harp, if I so far forget the religion of my country as to make use of my songs and harps for the pleasing of Babylon's sons, or the praising of Babylon's gods: *Let my right hand forget her art*, (which the hand of an expert musician never can, unless it were withered) *nay, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth*, if I have not a good word to say for Jerusalem wherever I am. Though they dare not sing Zion's songs among the Babylonians, yet they cannot forget them, but as soon as ever the present restraint is taken off, they will sing them as readily as ever, notwithstanding the long disuse.

7. Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom, in the day of Jerusalem; who said, *Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.* 8. O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. 9. Happy shall be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

The pious Jews in Babylon having afflicted themselves with the thoughts of the ruins of Jerusalem, here please themselves with the prospect of the ruin of her impenitent, implacable enemies; but this not from a spirit of revenge, but from a holy zeal for the glory of God, and the honour of his kingdom.

1. The Edomites will certainly be reckoned with (and all others) that were accessaries to the destruction of Jerusalem, that were aiding and abetting, that *helped forward the affliction*, *Zech. i. 15.* and triumphed in it; that *said, in the day of Jerusalem, the day of her judgment, Rase it, rase it, to the foundations*; down with it, down with it, do not leave one stone upon another. Thus they made the Chaldean army more furious, who were already so enraged, that they needed no spur. Thus they put shame upon Israel, who would be looked upon as a people worthy to be cut off, when their next neighbours had such an ill will to them. And all this was a fruit of the old enmity of Esau against Jacob, because he got the birthright and the blessing, and a branch of that more ancient enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent: *Lord, remember them*, saith the psalmist; which is an appeal to his justice against them. Far be it from us to avenge ourselves, if ever it should be in our power, but we will leave it to him who hath said, *Vengeance is mine*. Note, They that are glad at calamities, especially the calamities of Jerusalem, shall not go unpunished. They that are confederate with the persecutors of good people, and stir them up, and set them on, and are pleased with what they do, shall certainly be called to an account for it another day, and God will remember it against them.

2. Babylon is the principal, and it will come to her turn too, to drink of the cup of tremblings, the very dregs of it, *ver. 8, 9.* *O daughter of Babylon*, as proud and secure as thou art, we know very well by the scriptures of truth, *thou art to be destroyed*; or, as Dr. Hammond reads it, *who art the destroyer*. The destroyers shall be destroyed, *Rev. xiii. 10.* and, perhaps, it is with reference

to this that the man of sin, the head of the New Testament Babylon, is called a *son of perdition*, 2 Theff. ii. 3. The destruction of Babylon being foreseen as a sure destruction, thou art to be destroyed, it is spoken of, 1. As a just destruction; she shall be paid in her own coin; thou shalt be served as thou hast served us; as barbarously used by the destroyers, as we have been by thee. See Rev. xviii. 6. Let not those expect to find mercy, who, when they had power, did not shew mercy. 2. As an utter destruction; the very little ones of Babylon, when it is taken by storm, and all in it put to the sword, shall be dashed to pieces by the enraged and merciless conqueror. None escape, if these little ones perish. Those are the seed of another generation; so that if they be cut off, the ruin will be not only total, as Jerusalem was, but final. It is sunk like a millstone into the sea, never to rise. 3. As a destruction which should reflect honour upon the instruments of it. Happy shall they be that do it; for they are fulfilling God's counsels, and therefore he calls Cyrus, that did it, his servant, his shepherd, his anointed, Isa. xlv. ult. xlv. 1. and the soldiers that were employed in it his *sanctified ones*, Isa. xliii. 3. And they are making way for the enlargement of God's Israel, and happy they that are any way servicable to that. The fall of the New Testament Babylon will be the triumph of all the saints, Rev. xix. 1.

P S A L M CXXXVIII.

It doth not appear, nor is it material to enquire, upon what occasion David penned this psalm; but in it, 1. He looks back with thankfulness upon the experiences he had had of God's goodness to him, ver. 1.—3. 2. He looks forward with comfort, in hopes, (1.) That others would go on to praise God like him, ver. 4, 5. (2.) That God would go on to do good to him, ver. 6, 7, 8. In singing this psalm we must in like manner devote ourselves to God's praise and glory, and repose ourselves in his power and goodness.

¶ A psalm of David.

1. I Will praise thee with my whole heart, before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. 2. I will worship towards thy holy temple, and praise thy name, for thy loving kindness, and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. 3. In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me: and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul. 4. All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth. 5. Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: for great is the glory of the LORD.

1. How he would praise God; compare Psalm cxi. 1.

(1.) He will praise him with sincerity and zeal: *With my heart, with my whole heart*; with that which is within me, and with all that is within me; with uprightness of intention, and fervency of affection; inward impressions agreeing with outward expressions. (2.) With freedom and boldness: *Before the gods will I sing praise unto thee*; before the princes, and judges, and great men; either those of other nations that visited him, or those of his own nation that attended on him. Even in their presence he will not only praise God with his heart, which we may do by pious ejaculations in any company, but will sing praise, if there be occasion. Note, Praising God is work which the greatest of men need not be ashamed of; it is the work of angels, the work of heaven. *Before the angels*, so some understand it, i. e. in religious assemblies, where there is a special presence of angels, 1 Cor. i. 10. (3.) In the way that God had appointed: *I will worship towards thy holy temple*. The priests only went into the temple, the people, at the nearest, did but worship towards it, and that they might do at a distance. Christ is our temple, and towards him we must look with an eye of faith, as Mediator between us and God, in all our praises of him. Heaven is God's holy temple, and thitherwards we must lift up our eyes in all our addresses to God: *Our Father in heaven*.

2. What he would praise God for.

(1.) For the fountain of his comforts; *for thy loving kindness, and for thy truth*; for thy goodness, and for thy promise; mercy hid in thee, and mercy revealed by thee; that God is a gracious God in himself, and has engaged to be so to all those that trust in him: *For thou hast magnified thy word*, i. e. thy promise, which is truth, *above all thy name*. God has made himself known to us many ways, in creation and providence, but most clearly by his word. The judgments of his mouth are magnified even above those of his hand, and greater are done by them. The wonders of grace exceed the wonders of nature; and what is discovered of God by revelation, is much greater than what is discovered by reason. In what God had done for David, his faithfulness to his word appeared more illustrious, and redounded more to his glory than any other of his attributes. Some good interpreters understand it of Christ, the essential word, and of his gospel, which are magnified above all the discoveries God had before made of himself to the fathers. He that magnified the law, and made that honourable, magnifies the gospel much more.

(2.) For the streams flowing from that fountain, in which he himself had tasted that the Lord is gracious, ver. 3. He had been in affliction, and he remembers with thankfulness, 1. The sweet communion he then had with God. He cried, prayed, and prayed earnestly, and God answered him, gave him to understand that his prayer was accepted, and should have a gracious return in due time. The intercourse between God and his saints is carried on by his promises and their prayers. 2. The sweet communications he then had from God; *thou strengthenedst me with strength in my soul*. This was the answer to his prayer, for God gives more than good words, Psalm xx. 6. Observe, (1.) It was a speedy answer: *In the day when I cried*. Note, Those that trade with heaven by prayer, grow rich by quick returns: *While we are yet speaking, God hears*, Isa. lxv. 24. (2.) It was a spiritual answer; God gave him strength in his soul; and that is a real and valuable answer to the prayer of faith in the day of affliction: If God give us strength in our souls to bear the burthens, resist the temptations, and do the duties of an afflicted state; if he strengthen us to keep hold of himself by faith, to maintain the peace of our own minds, and to wait with patience for the issue, we must own that he hath answered us, and are bound to be thankful.

3. What influence he hoped his praising God would have upon others, ver. 4, 5. David was himself a king, and therefore he hoped that kings would be wrought upon by his experiences, and his examples, to embrace religion; and if kings became religious, their kingdoms would be every way better. Now, 1. This may have reference to the kings that were neighbours to David, as Hiram and others; they shall all praise thee; when they visited David, and after his death, when they sought the presence of Solomon, as *all the kings of the earth* are expressly said to do, 2 Chron. ix. 23. they readily joined in the worship of the God of Israel. 2. It may look further to the calling of the Gentiles, and the discipling of all nations by the gospel of Christ, of which it is said, that *all kings shall fall down before him*, Psalm lxxii. 11. Now it is here foretold, (1.) That the *kings of the earth shall hear the words of God*. All that came near David should hear them from him, Psalm cxix. 46. In the latter days the preachers of the gospel should be sent into all the world. (2.) That then they shall praise God; as all those have reason to do, that hear his word, and receive it in the light and love of it, Acts xiii. 48. (3.) That they shall *sing in the ways of the Lord*; in the ways of his providence and grace towards them; they shall rejoice in God, and give glory to him, however he is pleased to deal with them, in the ways of their duty and obedience to him. Note, They that walk in the ways of the Lord, have reason to sing in those ways, i. e. to go on in them with a great deal of cheerfulness, for they are ways of pleasantness, and it becomes us to be pleasant in them; and if we were so, *great is the glory of the Lord*. It is very much for the honour of God that kings should walk in his ways, and that all those that walk in them should sing in them, and so proclaim to all the world that he is a good master, and his work its own wages.

6. Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.

7. Though I walk in the mids of trouble, thou wilt revive me, thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me. 8. The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever; forsake not the works of thine own hands.

David here comforts himself with three things.

1. The favour God bears to his humble people, ver. 6. *Though the Lord be high*, and neither needs any of his creatures, nor can be benefited by them, *yet hath he respect unto the lowly*; smiles upon them, as well pleased with them, overlooks heaven and earth, to cast a gracious look upon them, Isa. lvii. 15. lxvi. 1. and sooner or later he will put honour upon them, while he knows the proud afar off, knows them, but disowns them, and rejects them, how proudly soever they pretend to his favour. Dr. Hammond makes this to be the sum of that gospel which the kings of the earth shall hear and bid welcome, that penitent sinners shall be accepted of God, but the impenitent cast out; witness the instance of the Pharisee and the publican, Luke xviii.

2. The care God takes of his afflicted, oppressed people, ver. 7. David, though a great and good man, expects to *walk in the midst of trouble*, but encourageth himself with hope, 1. That God would comfort him. When my spirit is ready to sink and fail, *thou shalt revive me*, and make me easy and cheerful under my troubles. Divine consolations have enough in them to revive us even when we walk in the midst of troubles, and are ready to die away for fear. 2. That he would protect him, and plead his cause. *Thou shalt stretch forth thine hand*, though not against mine enemies, to destroy them, yet *against the wrath of mine enemies*, to restrain that, and set bounds to it. 3. That he would in due time work deliverance for him: *Thy right hand shall save me*. As he has one hand to stretch out against his enemies, so he has another to save his own people. Christ is the right hand of the Lord, that shall save all those that serve him,

3. The

3. The assurance we have that whatever good work God has begun in and for his people, he will perform it, *ver. 8. The Lord will perfect that which concerns me*, i. e. 1. That which is most needful for me, and he knows best what is so. *We are careful and cumbered about many things* that do not concern us, but he knows what are the things that really are of consequence to us, *Matt. vi. 32.* and he will order them for the best. 2. That which we are most concerned about: every good man is most concerned about his duty to God, and his happiness in God; that the former may be faithfully done, and the latter effectually secured; and if indeed these are the things that our hearts are most upon, and concerning which we are most solicitous, there is a good work begun in us, and he that has begun it will perfect it, we may be confident he will, *Phil. i. 6.* Observe, (1.) What ground the psalmist builds this confidence upon. *Thy mercy, O Lord, endures for ever.* This he had made very much the matter of his praise, *Psal. xiii. 6.* and therefore he could here with the more assurance make it the matter of his hope: For if we give God the glory of his mercy, we may take to ourselves the comfort of it. Our hopes that we shall persevere, must be founded, not upon our own strength, for that will fail us, but upon the mercy of God, for that will not fail. It is well pleaded, *Lord, thy mercy endures for ever*; let me be for ever a monument of it. (2.) What use he makes of this confidence; it doth not supersede, but quicken prayer; he turns his expectation into a petition; *For sake not, do not let go the work of thine own hands.* Lord, I am the work of thine own hands, my soul is so, do not forsake me; my concerns are so, do not lay by thy care of them. Whatever good there is in us, it is the work of God's own hands; *he works in us both to will and to do*; it will fail if he forsake it; but his glory, as Jehovah, a perfecting God, is so much concerned in the progress of it to the end, that we may in faith pray, Lord, do not forsake it. Whom he loves, he loves to the end; and as for God, his work is perfect.

P S A L M CXXXIX.

Some of the Jewish doctors are of opinion that this is the most excellent of all the psalms of David; and a very pious devout meditation it is upon the doctrine of God's omniscience, which we should therefore have our hearts fixed upon, and filled with, in singing this psalm.

1. *This doctrine is here asserted and fully laid down, ver. 1,—6.* 2. *It is confirmed by two arguments.* (1.) *God is every where present, therefore he knows all, ver. 7,—12.* (2.) *He made us, therefore he knows us, ver. 13,—16.* 3. *Some inferences are drawn from this doctrine.* (1.) *It may fill us with pleasing admiration of God, ver. 17, 18.* (2.) *With a holy dread and detestation of sin and sinners, ver. 19,—22.* (3.) *With a holy satisfaction in our own integrity, concerning which we may appeal to God, ver. 23, 24.* *This great and self-evident truth, that God knows our hearts, and the hearts of all the children of men, if we did but mix faith with it, and seriously consider it, and apply it, would have a great influence upon our holiness, and upon our comfort.*

¶ To the chief musician, A psalm of David.

1. **O** LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. 2. Thou knowest my down-sitting, and mine up-rising, thou understandest my thought afar off. 3. Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. 4. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. 5. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. 6. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

David here lays down this great doctrine, that the God with whom we have to do, has a perfect knowledge of us; and that all the motions and actions both of our inward and of our outward man, are naked and open before him.

1. He lays down this doctrine in the way of an address to God; he saith it to him, acknowledging it to him, and giving him the glory of it. Divine truths look full as well when they are prayed over, as when they are preached over; and much better than when they are disputed over. When we speak of God to him himself, we shall find ourselves concerned to speak with the utmost degree both of sincerity and reverence, which will be likely to make the impressions the deeper.

2. He lays it down in a way of application to himself: Not thou hast known all, but *thou hast known me*; that is it which I am most concerned to believe, and which it will be most profitable for me to consider: Then we know these things for our good, when we know them *for ourselves*, *Job v. ult.* when we acknowledge, Lord, all souls are thine, we must add, my soul is thine; thou that hatest all sin, hatest my sin; that art good to all, good to Israel, art good to me. So here, *thou hast searched me, and known me*, i. e. known me as thoroughly as we know that which we have most diligently and exactly searched into. David was a

king, and the hearts of kings are unsearchable to their subjects, *Prov. xxv. 3.* but they are not so to their sovereign.

3. He descends to particulars: Thou knowest me wherever I am, and whatever I am doing; me, and all that belongs to me. 1. *Thou knowest me* and all my motions, *my down-sitting* to rest, *my up-rising* to work, with what temper of mind I compose myself when I sit down, and stir up myself when I rise up: what my soul reposeth it self in as its stay and support, what it aims at, and reacheth towards, as its felicity and end. Thou knowest me when I come home, how I walk before my house, and when I go abroad, on what errands I go. 2. Thou knowest all my imaginations; nothing more close and quick than thought, it is always unknown to others, it is often unobserved by ourselves, and yet *thou understandest my thought afar off*. Though my thoughts be never so foreign, and distant one from another, thou understandest the chain of them, and canst make out their connection, when so many of them slip my notice, that I myself cannot. Or, *thou understandest them afar off*, even before I think them, and not long after I have thought them, and have myself forgotten them. Or, *thou understandest them from afar*, from the height of heaven thou seest into the depths of the heart, *Psal. xxxiii. 14.* (3.) Thou knowest me and all my designs and undertakings: *thou compassest every particular path: thou sittest, or winnowest my path* (so some) so as thoroughly to distinguish between the good and evil of what I do, as by sifting we separate between the corn and the chaff. All our actions are ventilated by the judgment of God, *Psal. xvii. 3.* God takes notice of every step we take, every right step, and every by-step: He is *acquainted with all our ways*, intimately acquainted with them; he knows what rule we walk by, what end we walk towards, what company we walk with. 4. *Thou knowest me* in all my retirements; thou knowest *my lying down*; when I am withdrawn from all company, and am reflecting upon what has passed all day, and composing myself to rest, thou knowest what I have in my heart, and with what thoughts I go to bed. 5. Thou knowest me, and all I say, *ver. 4.* *There is not a word in my tongue*, not a vain word, not a good word, but *thou knowest it altogether*; knowest what it meant, from what thought it came, and with what design it was uttered. There is not a word at my tongue's end, ready to be spoken, yet checked and kept in, but thou knowest it. *When there is not a word in my tongue, O Lord, thou knowest all*; so some read it; for thoughts are words to God. 6. Thou knowest me in every part of me: *Thou hast beset me behind and before*, so that go which way I will, I am under thine eye, and cannot escape it any way possible: Thou hast *laid thine hand upon me*, and I cannot outrun thee: Wherever we are, we are under the eye and hand of God. Perhaps, it is an allusion to the physician's laying his hand upon his patient, to feel how his pulse beats, or what temper he is in. God knows us as we know not only what we see, but what we feel, and have our hands upon. *All his saints are in his hand.*

4. He speaks of it with admiration, *ver. 6.* *It is too wonderful for me; it is high*, i. e. 1. Thou hast such a knowledge of me, as I have not of myself, nor can have. I cannot take notice of all my own thoughts, nor make such a judgment of myself as thou makest of me. 2. It is such a knowledge as I cannot comprehend, much less describe. That thou knowest all things I am sure, but how I cannot tell. We cannot by searching find out how God searcheth and finds out us; nor do we know how we are known.

7. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? 8. If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. 9. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: 10. Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. 11. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me: even the night shall be light about me. 12. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. 13. For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. 14. I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well. 15. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret; and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. 16. Thine eyes did see my substance yet being unperfect, and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

It is of great use to us to know the certainty of the things where-in we have been instructed, that we may not only believe them, but be able to tell why we believe them, and to give a reason of the hope that is in us. David is therefore sure that God perfectly knows him and all his ways.

1. Because he is always under his eye : If God is omnipresent, he must needs be omniscient ; but he is omnipresent ; this supposeth the infinity and immensity of his being, from which follows the ubiquity of his presence ; heaven and earth include the whole creation, and the Creator fills both, *Jer. xxiii. 24.* he doth not only know both, and govern both, but he fills both. Every part of the creation is under God's intuition and influence. David here acknowledgeth this also with application, and sees himself thus open before God.

(1.) No flight can remove us out of God's presence. *Whither shall I go from thy spirit ? from thy presence ?* i. e. from thy spiritual presence, from thy self, who art a spirit. *God is a spirit*, and therefore it is folly to think that because we cannot see him he cannot see us : *Whither shall I flee from thy presence ?* Not that he did desire to go away from God ; no, he desired nothing more than to be near him ; but he only puts the case, Suppose I should be such a fool as to think of getting out of thy sight, that I might shake off the awe of thee : suppose I should think of revolting from my obedience to thee, or disowning a dependence on thee, and shifting for myself ; alas, Whither can I go ? A heathen could say, *Quacunq; te flexeris ibi Deum videbis occurrentem tibi*, Seneca.

He instances in the most remote and distant places, and counts upon meeting God in them. 1. *In heaven : If I ascend thither*, as I hope to do shortly, *thou art there* ; and it will be my eternal bliss to be with thee there. Heaven is a vast large place replenished with an innumerable company, and yet there is no escaping God's eye there, in any corner, or any crowd. The inhabitants of that world have as necessary a dependence upon God, and lie as open to his strict scrutiny, as the inhabitants of this. 2. *In hell ; in Sheol ;* which may be understood either of the depth of the earth, the very centre of it : Should we dig as deep as we can under ground, and think to hide ourselves there, we should be mistaken ; God knows that path which the vulture's eye never saw, and to him the earth is all surface. Or, of the state of the dead ; when we are removed out of the sight of all living, yet not out of the sight of the living God ; from his eye we cannot hide us in the grave. Or, of the place of the damned ; *If I make my bed in hell* (an uncomfortable place to make a bed in, where there is no rest day or night, yet thousands will make their bed for ever in those flames) *behold thou art there*, in thy power and justice. God's wrath is the fire which will there burn everlastingly, *Rev. xiv. 10.* 3. In the remotest corners of this world ; *If I take the wings of the morning*, the rays of the morning light, (called the wings of the sun, *Mal. iv. 2.*) than which nothing more swift, and flee upon them to the uttermost parts of the sea, or of the earth, *Job xxxviii. 12, 13.* Should I flee to the utmost distant and obscure islands, (the *ultima Thule*, the *Terra incognita*) I should find thee there ; *there shall thy hand lead me*, as far as I go, *and thy right hand shall hold me*, that I can go no farther, that I cannot go out of thy reach. God soon arrested Jonah, when he fled to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

(2.) No veil can hide us from God's eye, no, not that of the thickest darkness, *ver. 11, 12.* *If I say*, yet the darkness shall cover me, when nothing else will ; alas ! I find myself deceived, the curtains of the evening will stand me in no more stead than the wings of the morning ; *even the night shall be light about me*. That which often favours the escape of a pursued criminal, and the retreat of a beaten army, yet will do me no kindness in fleeing from thee : When God divided between the light and darkness, it was with a reservation of this prerogative, that to himself the darkness and the light should still be both alike. The darkness darkneth not from thee, for there is no darkness or shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves : No hypocritical mask or disguise, how specious soever, can save any person or action from appearing in a true light before God. Secret haunts of sin are as open before God as the most open and barefaced villainies.

2. Because he is the work of his hands : he that framed the engine, knows all the motions of it : God made us, and therefore no doubt he knows us : he saw us when we were in the forming, and can we be hid from him now we are formed ? This argument he insists upon, *ver. 13, 14, 15, 16.* *Thou hast possessed my reins*, i. e. thou art master of my most secret thoughts and intentions, and the innermost recesses of my soul ; thou not only knowest, but governest them, as we do that which we have possession of ; and the possession thou hast of my reins is a rightful possession, *for thou coveredst me in my mother's womb*, i. e. thou madest me, *Job x. 11.* thou madest me a secret ; the soul is concealed from all about us ; *Who knows the things of a man, save the spirit of a man ?* 1 Cor. ii. 11. hence we read of the hidden man of the heart. But it was God himself that thus covered us, and therefore he can when he pleaseth discover us ; when he hid us from all the world, he did not intend to hide us from himself.

Concerning the formation of man, of each of us ;

(1.) The glory of it is here given to God, intirely to him ; *for it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.* I will praise thee, the author of my being ; my parents were only the instruments of it. It was done, 1. Under the divine inspection : *My substance*, when hid in the womb, nay, when it was yet but in fieri, an unshapen embryo, *was not hid from thee, thine eyes did see my substance.* 2. By the divine operation : As the eye of God saw us then, so his hand wrought us ; we were his work. 3. According

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to the divine model : *In thy book all my members were written.* Eternal wisdom formed the plan, and by that almighty power raised the noble structure.

(2.) Glorious things are here said concerning it : the generation of man is to be considered with the same pious veneration, as his creation at first. Consider it, 1. As a great marvel, a great miracle we might call it, but that it is done in the ordinary course of nature. We are *fearfully and wonderfully made* ; we may justly be astonished at the admirable contrivance of these living temples, the composure of every part, and the harmony of all together. 2. As a great mystery ; a mystery of nature ; *My soul knows right well*, that it is marvellous, but how to describe it I know not, for any one else ; *for I was made in secret, and curiously wrought* in the womb, as in the lowest parts of the earth ; so privately, and so far out of sight. 3. As a great mercy ; that all our members in continuance were fashioned, according as they were written in the book of God's wise counsel, *when as yet there was none of them* ; or, as some read it, *and none of them was left out.* If any of our members had been wanting in God's book, they had been wanting in our bodies, but, through his goodness, we have all our limbs and senses, the want of any of which might have made us burthens to ourselves. See what reason we have then to praise God for our creation, and to conclude that he who saw our substance, when it was unfashioned, sees it now it is fashioned.

17. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God ? how great is the sum of them ? 18. *If I should count them*, they are more in number than the sand : when I wake, I am still with thee. 19. Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God : depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. 20. For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. 21. Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee ? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee ? 22. I hate them with perfect hatred, I count them mine enemies. 23. Search me, O God, and know my heart : try me, and know my thoughts. 24. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Here the psalmist makes application of the doctrine of God's omniscience divers ways.

1. He acknowledgeth with wonder and thankfulness the care God had taken of him all his days, *ver. 17, 18.* God that knew him, thought of him, and his thoughts towards him were thoughts of love ; *thoughts of good, and not of evil*, *Jer. xxiv. 11.* God's omniscience which might justly have watched over us to do us hurt, has been employed for us, and has watched over us to do us good, *Jer. xxxi. 28.* God's counsels concerning us and our welfare, have been, 1. Precious to admiration. *How precious are they !* They are deep in themselves, such as cannot possibly be fathomed and comprehended : Providence has had a vast reach in its dispensations concerning us, and has brought things about for our good, quite beyond our contrivance and foresight. They are dear to us ; we must think of them with a great deal of reverence, and yet with pleasure and thankfulness. Our thoughts concerning God must be delightful to us above any other thoughts. 2. Numerous to admiration. *How great is the sum of them ?* We cannot conceive how many God's kind counsels have been concerning us ; how many good turns he has done us ; and what variety of mercies we have received from him. *If we would count them*, the heads of them, much more the particulars of them, *they are more in number than the sand*, and yet every one great and very considerable, *Psal. xl. 5.* We cannot conceive the multitude of God's compassions, which are all new every morning. 3. Constant at all times. *When I awake*, every morning, *I am still with thee* ; under thine eye and care ; safe and easy under thy protection. This speaks also the continual devout sense David had of the eye of God upon him ; *when I awake, I am with thee*, in my thoughts ; and it would help to keep us in the fear of the Lord all the day long, if, when we awake in the morning, our first thoughts were of him, and we did then set him before us.

2. He concludes from this doctrine, that ruin will certainly be the end of sinners. God knows all the wickedness of the wicked, and therefore he will reckon for it : *Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God* ; for all their wickedness is open before thee, however it may be artfully disguised and coloured over, to hide it from the eye of the world : However thou suffer them to prosper for a while, *surely thou wilt slay them at last.* Now observe, 1. The reason why God will punish them ; because they daringly affront him, and set him at defiance, *ver. 20.* *They speak against thee wickedly ; they set their mouth against the heavens*, *Psal. lxxiii. 9.* and shall be called to account for the hard speeches they have spoken against him, *Jude 15.* They are his enemies, and declare their enmity by taking his name in vain ; as we shew our contempt of a man, if we make a by-word of his name, and never mention him but in a way of jest and banter. Those that profane the sacred forms of swearing, or praying, by using them in an impertinent, irreverent manner,

manner, takes God's name in vain, and thereby shew themselves enemies to him. Some make it to be a description of hypocrites; they speak of thee for mischief; they talk of God, pretending to piety, but it is with some ill design, for a cloke of maliciousness; and being enemies to God, while they pretend friendship, they *take his name in vain*, i. e. they swear falsely. 2. The use David makes of this prospect he has of the ruin of the wicked. (1.) He defies them: *Depart from me, ye bloody men*, i. e. ye shall not debauch me, for I will not admit your friendship, nor have fellowship with you; and you cannot destroy me; for, being under God's protection, he shall force you to depart from me. (2.) He detests them, *ver. 21, 22.* Lord, thou knowest the heart, and canst witness for me; *Do not I hate them, that hate thee?* and for that reason, because they hate thee? and therefore I hate them because I love thee, and hate to see such affronts and indignities put upon thy blessed name. *Am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?* grieved to see their rebellion, and to foresee their ruin which it will certainly end in? Note, Sin is hated, and sinners lamented, by all that fear God. *I hate them*, i. e. *I hate the work of them that turn aside*, as he explains himself, *Psal. ci.* 3. *With a sincere and perfect hatred; I count them that are enemies to God as enemies to me*, and will not have any intimacy with them, *Psal. lxi. 9.*

3. He appeals to God concerning his sincerity, *ver. 23, 24.*

(1.) He desires that as far as he was in the wrong God would discover it to him. They that are upright can take comfort in God's omniscience as a witness of their uprightness, and can with an humble confidence beg of him to search and try them, to discover them to themselves; for a good man desires to know the worst by himself, and to discover them to others: He that means honestly, could wish he had a window in his breast, that any man may look into his heart. Lord, I hope I am not in a wicked way, but *see if there be any wicked way in me*, any corrupt inclination remaining; let me see it, and root it out of me, for I do not allow it.

(2.) He desires that as far as he was in the right he might be forwarded in it, which he that knows the heart knows how to do effectually; *Lead me in the way everlasting.* Note, 1. The way of godliness is an everlasting way, it is everlastingly true and good; pleasing to God, and profitable to us; and will end in everlasting life. *It is the way of antiquity*, so some; the good old way. 2. All the saints desire to be kept and led in this way, that they may not miss it, turn out of it, or tire in it.

P S A L M CXL.

This and the four following psalms are much of a piece, and the scope of them the same with many that we met with in the beginning and middle of the book of Psalms, but few of late. They were penned by David (as it should seem) when he was persecuted by Saul; one of them is said to be his prayer when he was in the cave, and it is probable all the rest were penned about the same time. In this psalm, 1. David complains of the malice of his enemies, and prays to God to preserve him from them, ver. 1,—5. 2. He encourages himself in God, as his God, ver. 6, 7. 3. He prays for, and prophesies the destruction of his persecutors, ver. 8,—11. 4. He assures all God's afflicted people that their troubles would in due time end well, ver. 12, 13. with which assurance we must comfort ourselves, and one another, in singing this psalm.

¶ To the chief musician, A psalm of David.

1. **D**ELIVER me, O LORD, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man. 2. Which imagine mischiefs in *their* heart; continually are they gathered together for war. 3. They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders poison is under their lips. Selah. 4. Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked, preserve me from the violent man, who have purposed to overthrow my goings. 5. The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords, they have spread a net by the way-side: they have set grins for me. Selah. 6. I said unto the LORD, Thou art my God: hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD. 7. O God the LORD, the strength of my salvation; thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.

In this, as in other things, David was a type of Christ, that he suffered before he reigned, was humbled before he was exalted; and that as there were many who loved and valued him, and fought to do him honour, so there were many that hated and envied him, and fought to do him mischief, as appears by these verses, where,

1. He gives a character of his enemies, and paints them out in their own colours, as dangerous men, that he had reason to be afraid of, but ill men, that he had no reason to think the righteous God would countenance. There was one that seems to have been the ring-leader of them, whom he calls the evil man, and the man of violences, *ver. 1, 7.* probably, he means Saul: The Chaldee

paraphrast, *ver. 9.* names both Doeg and Ahithophel; but between them there was a great distance of time. Violent men are evil men. But there were many besides this one that were confederate against David, who are here represented as the genuine offspring and seed of the serpent. For, 1. They are very subtil, crafty to do mischief; they have imagined it, *ver. 2.* have laid the scheme with all the art and cunning imaginable: They have purposed and plotted to overthrow the goings of a good man, *ver. 4.* to draw him into sin and trouble, to ruin him by blasting his reputation, crushing his interest, and taking away his life. To this purpose they have, like mighty hunters, *hid a snare*, and *spread a net*, and *set grins*, *ver. 5.* that their designs against him being kept undiscovered, might be the more likely to take effect, and he might fall into their hands ere he was aware. Great persecutors have often been great politicians, which has indeed made them the more formidable; but *the Lord preserveth the simple* without all those arts. 2. They are very spiteful; as full of malice as Satan himself: They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent, that infuseth his venom with his tongue; and there is so much malignity in all they say, that one would think there were nothing under their lips but *adders poison*, *ver. 3.* With their calumnies, and with their counsels, they aimed to destroy David, but secretly, as a man is stung with a serpent, or a snake in the grass: And they endeavoured likewise to infuse their malice into others, and to make them seven times more the children of hell than themselves. A malignant tongue makes men like the old serpent; and poison in the lips is a certain sign of poison in the heart. 3. They are confederate; they are many of them; but they are all gathered together against me for war, *ver. 2.* They that can agree in nothing else, can agree to persecute a good man: Herod and Pilate will unite in this, and in this they resemble Satan, who is not divided against himself, all the devils agreeing in Beelzebub. 4. They are proud, *ver. 5.* conceited of themselves, and confident of their success; and herein also they resemble Satan, whose reigning, ruining sin was pride. The pride of persecutors, though at present it be the terror, yet may be the encouragement of the persecuted, for the more haughty they are, the further are they ripening for ruin. *Pride goes before destruction.*

2. He prays to God to keep him from them, and from being swallowed up by them. Lord, deliver me, preserve me, keep me, *ver. 1, 4.* let them not prevail to take away my life, my reputation, my interest, my comfort, and to prevent my coming to the throne. Keep me from doing as they do, or as they would have me do, or as they promise themselves I will do. Note, The more malice appears in our enemies against us, the more earnest we should be in prayer to God to take us under his protection: In him believers may count upon a security, and may enjoy it and themselves with a holy serenity. Those are safe whom God preserves. If he be for us, who can be against us?

3. He triumphs in God, and thereby, in effect, he triumphs over his persecutors, *ver. 6, 7.* When his enemies sharpened their tongues against him, did he sharpen his against them? No; *adders poison* was under their lips, but grace was poured into his lips, witness what he here said unto the Lord, for to him he looked, to him he directed himself, when he saw himself in so much danger through the malice of his enemies; and it is well for us we have a God to go to. He comforted himself, 1. In his interest in God. *I said, Thou art my God*; and if my God, then my shield and mighty protector. In troublous, dangerous times it is good to claim relation to God, and by faith to keep hold of him. 2. In his access to God. This comforted him, not only that he was taken into covenant with God, but into communion with him, that he had leave to speak to him, and might expect an answer of peace from him, and could say with an humble confidence, *Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord.* 3. In the assurance he had of help from God, and happiness in him. O God the Lord, Jehovah, Adonai; as Jehovah thou art self-existent and self-sufficient, an infinitely perfect being; as Adonai thou art my stay and support, my ruler and governor; and therefore *the strength of my salvation*, i. e. my strong saviour; nay, not only my saviour, but my salvation itself, from whom, in whom my salvation is; not only a strong saviour, but the very strength of my salvation, on whom the stress of my hope is laid; all in all to make me happy, and to preserve me to my happiness. 4. In the experience he had had formerly of God's care of him. *Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.* As he pleaded with Saul, that for the service of his country, he many a time jeopardied his life in the high places of the field, so he pleads with God, that in those services he had wonderfully protected him, and provided him a better helmet for the securing of his head than Goliath's was. Lord, thou hast kept me in the day of battle with the Philistines, suffer me not to fall by the treacherous intrigues of false-hearted Israelites. God is as able to preserve his people from secret fraud as from open force; and the experience we have had of his power and care in dangers of one kind, may encourage us to trust in him, and depend upon him, in dangers of another nature; for nothing can shorten the Lord's right hand.

8. Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked, further not his wicked device, lest they exalt themselves. Selah.

Selah. 9. *As for the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them.* 10. Let burning coals fall upon them, let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not up again. 11. Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth: evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him. 12. I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor. 13. Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name, the upright shall dwell in thy presence.

Here is the believing foresight David had,

1. Of the shame and confusion of persecutors.

(1.) Their disappointment; this he prays for, *ver. 8.* that their lusts might not be gratified, their lust of ambition, envy and revenge: *Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked,* but frustrate them; let them not see the ruin of my interest, which they so earnestly wish to see; but *hear the voice of my supplications.* That their projects might not take effect, but be blasted; *O further not his wicked device;* let not providence favour any of his designs, but cross them; suffer *not his wicked device* to proceed, but scotch his wheels, and stop him in the career of his pursuits. Thus we are to pray against the enemies of God's people, that they may not succeed in any of their enterprizes: Such was David's prayer against Ahithophel, that God would turn his counsels into foolishness. The plea is, *lest they exalt themselves;* value themselves upon their success, as if it were an evidence that God favoured them. Proud men when they prosper are made prouder, grow more impudent against God, and insolent against his people, and therefore, Lord, do not prosper them.

(2.) Their destruction. This he prays for, (as we read it) but some choose to read it rather as a prophecy, and the original will bear it. If we take it as a prayer that proceeds from a spirit of prophecy, which comes all to one, he foretells the ruin,

1. Of his own enemies. *As for those that compass me about, and seek my ruin, (1.) The mischief of their own lips shall cover their heads, ver. 9.* i. e. the evil they have wished to me shall come upon themselves; their curses shall be blown back into their own faces; and the very designs which they have laid against me shall turn to their own ruin, *Psalm vii. 15, 16.* Let those that make mischief, by slandering, tale-bearing, misrepresenting their neighbours, and spreading ill-natured characters and stories, dread the consequence of it, and think how sad their condition will be when all the mischief they have been accessory to shall be made to return upon themselves. (2.) The judgments of God shall fall upon them, compared here to *burning coals,* in allusion to the destruction of Sodom: nay, as in the deluge, the waters from above, and those from beneath, met for the drowning of the world, both the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up, so here, to compleat the ruin of the enemies of Christ, and his kingdom, they shall not only have *burning coals* cast upon them from above, *Job xx. 23. xxvii. 22.* but they themselves shall be cast into the fire beneath; both heaven and hell, the wrath of God the Judge, and the rage of Satan the tormenter, shall concur to make them miserable. And the fire they shall be cast into is not a furnace of fire, out of which, perhaps, they might escape, but a *deep pit,* out of which they cannot rise. Tophet is said to be deep and large, *Isa. xxx. 33.*

2. Of all others that are like them, *ver. 11.* (1.) *Evil speakers* must expect to be shaken, for they shall never be established in the earth. What is got by fraud and falsehood, by calumny and unjust accusation, will not prosper, will not last. Wealth gotten by vanity will be diminished. Let not such men as Doeg think to reign long, for his doom will be theirs, *Psalm ii. 5.* A lying tongue is but for a moment, but the *lip of truth shall be established for ever.* (2.) Evil Doeg must expect to be destroyed: *Evil shall hunt the violent man,* as the blood-hound hunts the murderer to discover him, as the lion hunts his prey to tear it to pieces; mischievous men will be brought to light, and brought to ruin, the destruction appointed shall run them down, and overthrow them. *Evil pursues sinners.*

2. Here is his foresight of the deliverance and comfort of the persecuted, *ver. 12, 13.* (1.) God will do them justice in delivering them, who being wronged commit themselves to him. *I know that the Lord will maintain the just and injured cause of his afflicted people,* and will not suffer might always to prevail against right, though it be but *the right of the poor,* who have but little that they can pretend a right to. God is and will be the patron of oppressed innocence, much more of persecuted piety; they that know him, cannot but know this. (2.) They will do him justice, (if I may so speak) in ascribing the glory of their deliverance to him. *Surely the righteous (who make conscience of rendering to God his due, as well as to men theirs) shall give thanks unto thy name,* when they find their cause pleaded with jealousy, and prosecuted with effect. The closing words, *The upright shall dwell in thy presence,* include both God's favour to them, thou shalt admit them to dwell in thy presence in grace here, in glory hereafter, and it shall be their safety and happiness, and their duty to God; they shall attend upon thee

as servants that keep in the presence of their master, both to do them honour, and to receive their commands. This is true thanksgiving, even thanksgiving; and this use we should make of all our deliverances, we should serve God the more closely and cheerfully.

PSALM CXLI.

David was in distress when he penned this psalm; it is most likely, pursued by Saul, that violent man. Is any distressed? Let him pray; David did so, and had the comfort of it. 1. He prays for God's favourable acceptance, *ver. 1, 2.* 2. For his powerful assistance, *ver. 3, 4.* 3. That others might be instrumental of good to his soul, as he hoped to be to the souls of others, *ver. 5, 6.* 4. That he and his friends being now brought to the last extremity, God would graciously appear for their relief and rescue, *ver. 7—10.* The mercy and grace of God are as necessary to us as they were to him, and therefore we should be humbly earnest for them in singing this psalm.

A psalm of David.

LORD, I cry unto thee, make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee. 2. Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. 3. Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth, keep the door of my lips. 4. Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties.

Mercy to accept what we do well, and grace to keep us from doing ill, are the two things which we are here taught by David's example to pray to God for.

1. David was in love with prayer, and he begs of God that his prayers might be heard and answered, *ver. 1, 2.* David cried unto God; his crying notes fervency in prayer, he prayed as one in earnest; his crying to God notes faith and fixedness in prayer. And what did he desire as the success of his prayer? (1.) That God would take cognizance of it, *give ear to my voice;* let me have a gracious audience; they that cry in prayer, may hope to be heard in prayer, not for their loudness, but their liveliness. (2.) That he would visit him upon it, *make haste unto me.* Those that know how to value God's gracious presence, will be importunate for it, and humbly impatient of delays. He that believes doth not make haste, but he that prays may be earnest with God to make haste. 3. That he would be well pleased with him in it; well pleased with his *praying* and the *lifting up of his hands in prayer;* which notes both the elevation and enlargement of his desire, and the out-goings of his hope and expectation; the lifting up of the hand signifying the lifting up of the heart, and being used instead of lifting up the sacrifices which were heaved and waved before the Lord. Prayer is a spiritual sacrifice, it is the offering up of the soul, and its best affections to God; now he prays that this may be set forth and directed before God, as the incense which was daily burnt upon the golden altar, and as the evening sacrifice, which he instances in rather than the morning sacrifice, perhaps, because this was an evening prayer, or with an eye to Christ, who in the evening of the world, and in the evening of the day was to offer up himself a sacrifice of atonement, and establish the spiritual sacrifices of acknowledgment, having abolished all the carnal ordinances of the law. They that pray in faith may expect it will please God better than an ox or bullock. David was now banished from God's court, and could not attend the sacrifice and incense, and therefore begs that his prayer might be instead of them. Note, Prayer is of a sweet smelling savour to God, as incense, which yet had no savour without fire; nor has prayer without the fire of holy love and fervour.

2. David was in fear of sin; and he begs of God that he might be kept from sin, knowing that his prayers would not be accepted, unless he took care to watch against sin; we must be as earnest for God's grace in us, as for his favour towards us.

(1.) He prays that he might not be surprized into any sinful words, *ver. 3.* Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and nature having made my lips to be a door to my words, let grace keep that door, that no word may be suffered to go out, which may any way tend to the dishonour of God, or the hurt of others. Good men know the evil of tongue-sins, and how prone they are to them; when enemies are provoking, we are in danger of carrying our resentments too far, and of speaking unadvisedly, as Moses did, though the meekest of men; and therefore they are earnest with God to prevent their speaking amiss, as knowing no watchfulness or resolution of their own, is sufficient for the governing of their tongues, much less of their hearts, without the special grace of God. We must keep our mouth as with a bridle, but that will not serve, we must pray to God to keep them; Nehemiah prayed to the Lord then when he set a watch, and so must we, for without him the watchman waketh but in vain.

(2.) That

(2.) That he might not be inclined to any sinful practices, *ver. 4. Incline not my heart to any evil thing*, i. e. Whatever inclination there is in me to sin, let it be not only restrained, but mortified by divine grace. The example of those about us, and the provocations of those against us, are apt to stir up, and draw out corrupt inclinations, we are ready to do as others do, and to think that if we received injuries we may return them, and therefore we have need to pray, that we may never be left to ourselves to practise any wicked work, either in confederacy with, or in opposition to the *men that work iniquity*. While we live in such an evil world, and carry about with us such evil hearts, we have need to pray that we may neither be drawn in by any allurements, nor driven on by any provocation to do any ill thing.

3. That he might not be ensnared by any sinful pleasures. *Let me not eat of their dainties*. Let me not join with them in their feasts and suppers, lest thereby I be inveigled into their sins; *better is a dinner of herbs out of the way of temptation, than a stalled ox in it*. Sinners pretend to find dainties in sin, *stolen waters are sweet*, forbidden fruit is pleasant to the eye, but they that consider how soon the dainties of sin will turn into wormwood and gall, how certainly it will at last *bite like a serpent*, and *sting like an adder*; will dread those dainties, and pray to God by his providence to take them out of their sight, and by his grace to turn their stomachs (as I may say) against them. Good men will pray against even the sweets of sin.

5. Let the righteous smite me, *it shall be a kindness*; and let him reprove me, *it shall be an excellent oil*, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also *shall be* in their calamities. 6. When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words, for they are sweet. 7. Our bones are scattered at the graves mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth. 8. But mine eyes are unto thee, O GOD the LORD: in thee is my trust, leave not my soul destitute. 9. Keep me from the snare which they have laid for me, and the grins of the workers of iniquity. 10. Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal escape.

Here, 1. David desires to be told of his faults; his enemies reproached him with that which was false, which he could not but complain of, yet at the same time he desires his friends would reprove him for that which was really amiss in him, particularly if there were any thing that gave the least colour to those reproaches, *ver. 5. Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness*. The righteous God, (so some) I will welcome the rebukes of his providence, and be so far from quarrelling with them, that I will receive them as tokens of love, and improve them as means of grace, and will pray for those that are the instruments of my trouble. But it is commonly taken for the reproofs given by righteous men; and it best becomes those that are themselves righteous to reprove the unrighteousness of others, and from them it will be best taken: But if the reproof be just, though the reprover be not so, we must make a good use of it, and learn obedience by it. But the reproofs of the righteous and wise, we are here taught how to receive. (1.) We must desire to be reproofed for whatever is amiss in us, or is done amiss by us. Lord, put it into the heart of the righteous to smite me, and reprove me. If my own heart doth not *smite me*, as it ought, let my friend do it; let me never fall under that dreadful judgment of being let alone in sin. (2.) We must account it a piece of friendship; we must not only bear it patiently, but take it as a kindness, for *reproofs of instruction are the way of life*, Prov. vi. 23. are means of good to us, to bring us to repentance for the sins we have committed, and to prevent relapses into sin. Reproofs, though they cut, it is in order to a cure, and therefore much more desirable than the kisses of an enemy, *Prov. xxvii. 6.* or the song of fools, *Ecc. vii. 5.*

David blessed God for Abigail's seasonable admonition, *1 Sam. xxi. 32.* (3.) We must reckon our selves helped and healed by it; *it shall be as an excellent oil* to a wound to mollify it, and close it up; *it shall not break my head*, as some reckon it to do, who could as well bear to have their heads broke, as to be told of their faults, but saith David, I am not of that mind; it is my sin that has broke my head, that has broke my bones, *Psal. li. 8.* The reproof is an excellent oil to cure the bruises sin has given me. It shall not *break my head*, if it may but help to break my heart. (4.) We must requite the kindness of those that deal thus faithfully, thus friendly with us, at least by our prayers for them in their calamities, and hereby we must shew that we took it kindly. Dr. Hammond gives quite another reading of this verse; *reproach will bruise me that am righteous, and rebuke me; but that poisonous oil shall not break my head*, i. e. shall not destroy me, shall not do me the mischief intended, *for yet my prayer shall be in their mischiefs*, that God would preserve me from them, and my prayer shall not be in vain.

2. David hopes his persecutors will some time or other bear to be told of their faults, as he was willing to be told of his, *ver. 6.*

when their judges (Saul and his officers that judged and condemned David, and would themselves be sole judges) when they are *overthrown in stony places*, among the rocks in the wilderness, then *they shall hear my words, for they are sweet*. Some think this refers to the relentings that were in Saul's breast, when he said with tears, *Is this thy voice, my son David?* *1 Sam. xxiv. 16. xxvi. 21.* Or we may take it more generally; even judges, as great as they are, may come to be overthrown; those that make the greatest figure in this world, do not always meet with level smooth ways through it. And those that slighted the word of God before, will relish it and be glad of it, when they are in affliction, for that opens the ear to instruction. When the world is bitter, the word is sweet. Oppressed innocency cannot gain a hearing with those that live in pomp and pleasure, but when they come to be overthrown themselves, they will have more compassionate thoughts of the afflicted.

3. David complains of the great extremity, to which he and his friends were reduced, *ver. 7. Our bones are scattered at the graves mouth*, out of which they are thrown up, so long have we been dead, or into which they are ready to be thrown, so near are we to the pit, and they are as little regarded as chips among the hewers of wood, which are thrown in neglected heaps. *As one that cuts and cleaves the earth*, so some read it, alluding to the plowman that tears the earth in pieces with his plow-share, *Psal. cxxix. 3. Can these dry bones live?*

4. David casts himself upon God, and depends upon him for deliverance. *But mine eyes are unto thee*, *ver. 8.* for when the case is never so deplorable, thou canst redress all the grievances, from thee I expect relief as bad as things are, and in *thee is my trust*. Those that have their eye towards God, may have their hopes in him.

5. He prays that God would succour and relieve him as his necessity required. (1.) That he would comfort him, *leave not my soul desolate and destitute*: Still let me see where my help is. (2.) That he would prevent the designs of his enemies against him, *ver. 9. Keep me from being taken in the snare they have laid for me*; give me to discover it, and to evade it. Be the grin placed with never so much subtilty, God can, and will secure his people from being taken in it. (3.) That God would in justice, turn the designs of his enemies upon themselves and in mercy deliver him from being ruined by them, *ver. 10. Let the wicked fall into their own net*, the net which intentionally they procured for me, but which meritoriously they prepared for themselves. *Nec lex est justior ulla quam necis artifices arte perire sua*. All that are bound over to God's justice, are held in the cords of their own iniquity. But let me at the same time obtain a discharge. The entangling and ensnaring of the wicked, sometimes proves the escape and enlargement of the righteous.

P S A L M CXLII.

This psalm is a prayer, the substance of which David offered up to God, when he was forced by Saul to take shelter in a cave, and afterwards penned it in this form. Here is, 1. The complaint he makes to God, ver. 1, 2. of the subtilty, strength and malice of his enemies, ver. 3, 6. and the coldness and indifferency of his friends, ver. 4. 2. The comfort he takes in God, that he knew his case, ver. 3. and was his refuge, ver. 5. 3. His expectation from God, that he would hear and deliver him, ver. 6, 7. 4. His expectation from the righteous, that they would join with him in praises, ver. 7. Those that are troubled in mind, body or estate, may, in singing this psalm, (if they sing it in some measure with David's spirit) both warrant his complaints, and fetch in his comforts.

Maschil of David, A prayer when he was in the cave.

1. **I** Cried unto the LORD, with my voice: with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication. 2. I poured out my complaint before him; I shewed before him my trouble. 3. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path: in the way wherein I walked, have they privily laid a snare for me.

Whether it was in the cave of Adullam, or that of Engedi, that David prayed this prayer, is not material; it is plain he was in distress; it was a great disgrace to so great a soldier, so great a courtier, to be put to such mean shifts for his own safety; and a great terror to be so hotly pursued, and every moment in expectation of death; yet then he had such a presence of mind, as to pray this prayer, and wherever he was, still he had his religion about him. Prayers and tears were his weapons, and when he durst not stretch forth his hands against his prince, he lifted them up to his God. There is no cave so deep, so dark, but we may out of it send up our prayers, and our souls in prayer to God. He calls this prayer Maschil, a psalm of instruction, because of the good

good lessons he had himself learnt in the cave, learnt on his knees, which he desired to teach others.

In these verses observe,

1. How David complained to God, *ver. 1, 2.* When the danger was over he was not ashamed to own (as great spirits sometimes are) the fright he had been in, and the application he had made to God. Let not men of the first rank think it any diminution or disparagement to them when they are in affliction, to cry to God, and to cry like children to their parents when any thing frightens them. *David poured out his complaint*, which notes a free and full complaint, he was large and particular in it. His heart was as full of his grievances as it could hold, but he made himself easy by pouring them out before the Lord; and this he did with great fervency, *He cried unto the Lord with his voice*, with the voice of his mind (so some think) for being hid in the cave, he durst not speak with an audible voice, lest that should have discovered him: but mental prayer is vocal to God, and he hears the groanings which cannot, or dare not be uttered, *Rom. viii. 26.* Two things David laid open to God in this complaint;

(1.) His distress; he exhibited a remonstrance or memorial of his case: *I shewed before him my trouble*, and all the circumstances of it. He did not prescribe to God, nor *shew him his trouble*, as if God did not know it without his shewing, but as one that put a confidence in God, desired to keep up communion with him, and was willing to refer himself intirely to him, he unbosomed himself to him, humbly laid the matter before him, and then cheerfully left it with him. We are apt to shew our trouble too much to ourselves, aggravating it, and poring upon it, which doth us no kindness, whereas by shewing it to God we might cast the care upon him, who careth for us, and thereby ease ourselves: Nor should we allow of any complaint to ourselves or others, which we cannot with the due decency and sincerity of devotion make to God, and stand to before him.

(2.) His desire. When he made his complaint, he *made his supplication*, *ver. 1.* Not claiming relief as a debt, but humbly begging it as a favour. Complainants must be supplicants, for God will be sought unto.

2. What he complained of. *In the way wherein I walked*, suspecting no danger, *have they privily laid a snare for me*, to entrap me. Saul gave Michal his daughter to David, on purpose that she might be a snare to him, *1 Sam. xviii. 21.* This he complains of to God, that every thing was done with design upon him. If he had gone out of his way, and met with snares, he might have thanked himself: but when he met with them in the way of his duty, he might with humble boldness tell God of them.

3. What comforts him in the midst of these complaints, *ver. 3.* *When my spirit was overwhelmed within me*, and ready to sink under the burthen of grief and fear, when I was quite at a loss, and ready to despair, *then thou knewest my path*, i. e. then it was a pleasure to me to think that thou knewest it. Thou knewest my sincerity, the right path which I have walked in, and that I am not such a one as my persecutors represent me; or, thou knewest my condition in all the particulars of it; when my spirit was so overwhelmed that I could not distinctly shew it, this comforted me that thou knewest it, *Job xxiii. 10.* Thou knewest it, i. e. thou didst protect, preserve and secure it, *Psal. xxxi. 7. Deut. ii. 7.*

4. I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but *there was no man that would know me*, refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. 5. I cried unto thee, O LORD, I said, thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living. 6. Attend unto my cry, for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors, for they are stronger than I. 7. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.

The psalmist here tells us for our instruction,

1. How he was disowned, and deserted by his friends, *ver. 4.* When he was in favour at court, he seemed to have a great interest, but when he was made an out-law, and it was dangerous for any body to harbour him, witness Ahimelech's fate, then *no man would know him*, but every body was shy of him. He looked on his right hand for an advocate, (*Psal. cix. 31.*) some friend or other to speak a good word for him. But since Jonathan's appearing for him had like to have cost him his life, no body was willing to venture in defence of his innocency, but all were ready to say they knew nothing of the matter. He looked round to see if any would open their doors to him, but *refuge failed him*, none of all his old friends would give him a night's lodging, or direct him to any place of secrecy and safety, such swallow friends, how many good men have been deceived by, that are gone when winter comes? David's life was exceeding precious, and yet when

he was unjustly proscribed, *no man cared for it*, nor would move a hand for the protection of it. Herein he was a type of Christ, who in his sufferings for us was forsaken of all men, even of his own disciples, and trod the wine-press alone, for there was *none to help, none to uphold*, *Isa. lxiii. 5.*

2. How he then found satisfaction in God, *ver. 5.* Lovers and friends stood aloof from him, and it was in vain to call to them, but *I cried unto thee, O Lord*, who knowest me, and carest for me, when none else will, and wilt not fail me nor forsake me, when men do, for God is constant in his love. David tells us what he said to God in the cave, *Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living*, I depend upon thee to be so, my refuge to save me from being miserable, my portion to make me happy. The cave I am in is but a poor refuge; Lord, *thy name is the strong tower that I run into*. Thou art my refuge, in whom alone I shall think my self safe. The crown I am in hopes of is but a poor portion, I can never think my self well provided for, till I know that *the Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup*. Those that in sincerity take the Lord for their God, shall find him all-sufficient both as a refuge and as a portion, so that as no evil shall hurt them, so no good shall be wanting to them; and they may humbly claim their interest; Lord, *thou art my refuge and my portion*, every thing else is a refuge of lies, and a portion of no value. Thou art so in the land of the living, i. e. while I live, and have my being in this world, and in a better. There is enough in God to answer all the necessities of this present time; we live in a world of dangers and wants; but what danger need we fear, if God is our refuge, or what wants, if he be our portion? Heaven, which alone deserves to be called *the land of the living*, will be to all believers both a refuge and a portion.

3. How in this satisfaction he addressed himself to God, *ver. 6, 7.* Lord, give a gracious ear to my cry, the cry of my affliction, the cry of my supplication, for *I am brought very low*, and if thou help me not, I shall be quite sunk. Lord, *deliver me from my persecutors*, either tie their hands, or turn their hearts, break their power, or blast their projects, restrain them, or rescue me, *for they are stronger than I*, and it will be thine honour to take part with the weakest. Deliver me from them, or I shall be ruined by them, for I am not yet my self a match for them. Lord, *bring my soul out of prison*, not only bring me safe out of this cave, but bring me out of all my perplexities. We may apply it spiritually, the souls of good men are oft streightened by doubts and fears, cramped and fettered through the weakness of faith, and the prevalency of corruption. And it is then their duty and interest to apply themselves to God, and beg of him to set them at liberty, and to enlarge their hearts, that they may *run the way of his commandments*.

4. How much he expected his deliverance would redound to the glory of God. (1.) By his own thanksgivings, into which his present complaints would then be turned. *Bring my soul out of prison*, not that I may enjoy my self and my friends, and live at ease, no, nor that I may secure my country, but *that I may praise thy name*. This we should have an eye to in all our prayers to God, for deliverance out of trouble, that we have occasion to praise God, and may live to his praise. This is the greatest comfort of temporal mercies, that they furnish us with matter, and give us opportunity for the excellent duty of praise. (2.) By the thanksgivings of many on his behalf, *2 Cor. i. 11.* When I am enlarged, *the righteous shall compass me about*, for *my cause they shall make thee a crown of praise*. So the Chaldee. They shall flock about me to congratulate my deliverance, to hear my experiences, and to receive (Mafchil) instructions from me; they shall compass me to join with me in my thanksgivings, *because thou shalt have dealt bountifully with me*. Note, Others mercies ought to be the matter of our praises to God; and others praises to God, on our behalf, ought to be both desired and rejoiced in by us.

P S A L M CXLIII.

This psalm, as those before, is a prayer, and full of complaints of the great distress and danger he was in, probably when Saul persecuted him. He did not only pray in that affliction, but he prayed very much, and very often, not the same over again, but new thoughts. In this psalm, (1.) He complains of his troubles, thro' the oppression of his enemies, *ver. 3.* and the weakness of his spirit under it, which was ready to sink notwithstanding the likely course he took to support himself, *ver. 4, 5.* (2.) He prays, and prays earnestly, *ver. 6.* 1. That God would hear him, *ver. 1, 7.* 2. That he would not deal with him according to his sins, *ver. 2.* 3. That he would not hide his face from him, *ver. 7.* but manifest his favour to him, *ver. 8.* 4. That he would guide and direct him in the way of his duty, *ver. 8, 10.* and quicken him in it, *ver. 11.* 5. That he would deliver him out of his troubles, *ver. 9, 11.* 6. That he would in due time reckon with his persecutors, *ver. 12.* We may the easier accommodate this psalm to ourselves in the singing of it, because most of the petitions in it are for spiritual blessings, which we all need at all times, mercy and grace.

A psalm of David.

HEAR my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications: in thy faithfulness, answer me, and in thy righteousness. 2. And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified. 3. For the enemy hath persecuted my soul, he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead. 4. Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me: my heart within me is desolate. 5. I remember the days of old, I meditate on all thy works: I muse on the work of thy hands. 6. I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul *thirsteth* after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah.

Here, 1. David humbly begs to be heard, *ver. 1.* not as if he questioned it, but he earnestly desired it, and was in care about it, for having directed his prayer, he looked up to see how it sped, *Hab. ii. 1.* He is a suppliant to his God, and he begs that his requests might be granted, *hear my prayer, give ear to my supplications*; he is an appellant against his persecutors, and he begs that his cause might be brought to hearing, and that God would give judgment upon it in his faithfulness and righteousness, as the judge of right and wrong. Or, answer my petitions in thy faithfulness, *i. e.* according to the promises thou hast made, which thou wilt be just to. We have no righteousness of our own to plead, and therefore must plead God's righteousness, the word of promise which he has freely given us, and caused us to hope in.

2. He humbly begs not to be proceeded against in strict justice, *ver. 2.* He seems here if not to correct, yet to explain his plea, *ver. 1.* deliver me *in thy righteousness*; I mean, faith he, the righteous promises of the gospel, not the righteous threatnings of the law; if I be answered according to the righteousness of this broken covenant, of innocency, I am quite undone; and therefore, (1.) His petition is, *enter not into judgment with thy servant*, *i. e.* do not deal with me in strict justice, as I deserve to be dealt with. In this prayer we must own ourselves to be God's servants, bound to obey him, accountable to him, and solicitous to obtain his favour, and approve ourselves to him; we must acknowledge that in many instances we have offended him, and have come short of our duty to him; that he might justly enquire into our offences, and proceed against us for them, according to law; and that if he should do so, judgment would certainly go against us, we have nothing to move in arrest or mitigation if it, but execution would be taken out and awarded, and then we are ruined for ever. But we must encourage our selves with a hope, that there is mercy and forgiveness with God, and be earnest with him for the benefit of that mercy. *Enter not into judgment with thy servant*, for thou hast already entered into judgment with thy Son, and laid upon him the iniquity of us all. *Enter not into judgment with thy servant*, for thy servant enters into judgment with himself; and if *we will judge ourselves, we shall not be judged.* (2.) His plea is, *in thy sight shall no man living be justified* upon those terms, for no man can plead innocency, nor any righteousness of his own, either that he has not sinned, or that he doth not deserve to die for his sins, or that he has any satisfaction of his own to offer; nay, if God contend with us, *we are not able to answer him for one of a thousand*, Job ix. 3. xv. 20.. David, before he prays for the removal of his trouble, prays for the pardon of his sin, and depends upon meer mercy for it.

3. He complains of the prevalency of his enemies against him, *ver. 3.* Saul, that great enemy, hath persecuted my soul, sought my life, with a restless malice, and has carried the persecution so far, that he hath already *smitten it down to the ground*; though I am not yet under ground, I am struck to the ground, and that is next door to it; he has forced me to *dwell in darkness*, not only in dark caves, but in dark thoughts and apprehensions, in the clouds of melancholy, as helpless and hopeless as those that have been long dead. Lord, let me find mercy with thee, for I find no mercy with men. They condemn me; but, Lord, do not thou condemn me. Am not I an object of thy compassion fit to be appeared for; and is not mine enemy an object of thy displeasure fit to be appeared against?

4. He bemoans the oppression of his mind, occasioned by his outward troubles, *ver. 4.* *Therefore is my spirit overpowered and overwhelmed within me*, and I am almost plunged in despair, when, without are fightings, within are fears, and those fears greater tyrants and oppressors than Saul himself, and not so easily out-run. It is sometimes the lot of the best men, to have their spirits for a time almost overwhelmed, and their hearts desolate, and doubtless it is their infirmity. David was not only a great saint, but a great soldier, and yet even he was sometimes ready to faint in a day of adversity; *Howl, fir-trees, if the cedars be shaken.*

5. He applies himself to the use of proper means for the relief of his troubled spirit. He had no force to muster up against the op-

pression of the enemy, but if he can keep possession of nothing else, he will do what he can to keep possession of his own soul, and to preserve his inward peace. In order to this, 1. He looks back, and *remembers the days of old*, *ver. 5.* God's former appearances for his afflicted people, and for him in particular. This has been often a relief to the people of God in their straits, to think of the wonders which their fathers told them of, *Psal. lxxvii. 5, 11.* 2. He looks round, and takes notice of the works of God in the visible creation, and the providential government of the world: *I meditate on all thy works*: Many see them, but do not see the footsteps of God's wisdom, power and goodness, in them, and therefore do not receive the benefit they might by them, because they do not meditate upon them; they do not dwell on that copious, curious subject, but soon quit it as if they had exhausted it, when they have scarce touched upon it. *I muse on*, or, as some read it, *I discourse of*, the operation of thy hands; how great, how good it is? The more we consider the power of God, the less we shall fear the face or force of man, *Isa. li. 12, 13.* 3. He looks up with earnest desires towards God and his favour, *ver. 6.* *I stretch forth my hands unto thee*, as one begging an alms, and big with expectation to receive something great, standing ready to lay hold on it, and bid it welcome: *My soul thirsteth after thee, it is to thee* (so the word is) *intire for thee, intent on thee, it is as a thirsty land*, which being parched with excessive heat, gapes for rain; so do I need, so do I crave the support and refreshment of divine consolations under mine afflictions, and nothing else will relieve me. This is the best course we can take when our spirits are overwhelmed; and justly do they sink under their load, that will not take such a ready way as this to ease themselves.

7. Hear me speedily, O LORD, my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit. 8. Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning, for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto thee. 9. Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me. 10. Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God: thy spirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightness. 11. Quicken me, O LORD, for thy names sake: for thy righteousness sake bring my soul out of trouble. 12. And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am thy servant.

David here tells us what he said when he stretched forth his hands unto God; he begins not only as one in earnest, but as one in haste; *Hear me speedily*, and defer no longer, for *my spirit faileth*. I am just ready to faint, reach the cordial, quickly, quickly, or I am gone. It was not a haste of unbelief, but of vehement desire, and holy love: *Make haste, O God, to help me.*

Three things David here prays for,

1. The manifestations of God's favour towards him; that God would be well pleased with him, and let him know that he was so, this he prefers before any good, *Psal. iv. 6.* 1. He dreads God's frowns: Lord, *hide not thy face from me*; Lord, be not angry with me; do not turn from me, as we do from one we are displeased with; Lord, let me not be left under the apprehensions of thine anger, or in doubt concerning thy favour; if I have thy favour, let it not be hid from me. Those that have the truth of grace cannot but desire the evidence of it. He pleads the wretchedness of his case if God withdrew from him. Lord, let me not lie under thy wrath, for then I am *like them that go down to the pit, down to the grave*; I am a dead man, weak and pale, and ghastly; thy frowns are worse than death; or down to hell, the bottomless pit: Even those who through grace are delivered from going down to the pit, yet may sometimes, when the terrors of the Almighty set themselves in array against them, look like those that are going to the pit. Disconsolate saints have sometimes cried out of the wrath of God, as if they had been damned sinners, *Job vi. 4.* *Psal. lxxviii. 6.* 2. He intreats God's favour, *ver. 8.* *Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning*. He cannot but think that God has a kindness for him; that he has some kind things to say to him, some good words and comfortable words, but the present hurry of his affairs, and tumult of his spirits, drowned those pleasing whispers, and therefore he begs, Lord, do not only speak kindly to me; but cause me to hear it; to *hear joy and gladness*, *Psal. li. 8.* God speaks to us by his word, and by his providence, and in both we should desire and endeavour to *hear his loving kindness*, *Psal. cvii. ult.* that we may set that always before us. *Cause me to hear it in the morning*, every morning; let my waking thoughts be of God's loving kindness, that the sweet relish of that may abide upon my spirits all the day long. His plea is, *for in thee do I trust*, and in thee only; I look not for comfort in any other. God's goodness useth to be wrought for those that trust in him, *Psal. xxxi. 8.* who by faith draw it out.

2. The operations of God's grace in him: Those he is as earnest for, as for the tokens of God's favour to him, and so should we be. He

He prays, 1. That he might be enlightned with the knowledge of God's will; and this is the first work of the Spirit, in order to his other works; for God deals with men, as men, as reasonable creatures. Here are three petitions to this purpose. (1.) *Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk*: Sometimes those that are much in care to walk right are in doubt, and in the dark which is the right way: let them come boldly to the throne of grace, and beg of God by his word and Spirit, and providence, to shew them the way, and prevent their missing it. A good man doth not ask what is the way in which he must walk, or in which is the most pleasant walking; but what is the right way, the way in which he should walk. He pleads, *I lift up my soul unto thee*, to be molded and fashioned according to thy will. He did not only importunately, but impartially desire to know his duty, and those that do so shall be taught. (2.) *Teach me to do thy will*; not only shew me what thy will is, but teach me how to do it, how to turn my hand dextrously to my duty. It is the desire and endeavour of all God's faithful servants to know and do his will, and to stand compleat in it. He pleads, *Thou art my God*, and therefore my oracle, by whom I may expect to be advised; my God, and therefore my ruler, whose will I desire to do. If we do in sincerity take God for our God, we may depend upon him to teach us to do his will, as a master doth his servant. (3.) *Lead me into the land of uprightness*, into the communion of saints, that pleasant land of the upright; or, into a settled course of holy living, which will lead to heaven, that land of uprightness, where holiness will be in perfection, and he that is holy shall be holy still. We should desire to be led and kept safe to heaven, not only because it is a land of blessedness, but because it is a land of uprightness; it is the perfection of grace. We cannot find the way that will bring us to that land unless God shew us; nor go in that way unless he take us by the hand and lead us, as we lead those that are weak or lame, or timorous, or dim-sighted; so necessary is the grace of God, not only to put us into the good way, but to keep us, and carry us on in it. The plea is, *Thy spirit is good*, and able to make me good; good and willing to help those that are at a loss. *Let thy good Spirit lead me*, so some read it: They that have the Lord for their God, have his Spirit for their guide; and it is both their character and their privilege, that they are *led by the Spirit*.

2. He prays that he might be enlivened to do his will, ver. 11. *Quicken me, O Lord*; quicken my graces that they may be active, quicken my devotions that they may be lively, quicken me to my duty, and quicken me in it, and this *for thy name's sake*. The best saints often find themselves dull, and dead, and slow, and therefore pray to God to quicken them.

3. The appearance of God's providence for him: That God would in his own way and time, 1. Give him rest from his troubles, ver. 9. *Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies*, that they may not have their will against me; *for I fly unto thee to hide me*; I trust to thee to defend me in my trouble, and therefore to rescue me out of it: Preservations are pledges of salvation, and those shall find God their hiding place, that by faith make him so. He explains himself, ver. 11. *For thy righteousness sake bring my soul out of trouble*; for thy promise sake; nay, for thy mercy sake. (for some by righteousness understand kindness and goodness) do not only deliver me from my outward trouble, but from the trouble of my soul, the trouble that threatens to overwhelm my spirit. Whatever trouble I am in, Lord, let not my heart be troubled, John xiv. 1. 2. That he would reckon with those that were the instruments of his trouble, ver. 12. *Of thy mercy to me, cut off mine enemies*, that I may be no longer in fear of them, and *destroy all them*, whoever they be, how numerous, how powerful soever, *that afflict my soul*, and create vexation to that; *for I am thy servant*, and am resolved to continue so, and therefore may expect to be owned and protected in thy service. This prayer is a prophecy of the utter destruction of all the impenitent enemies of Jesus Christ, and his kingdom, that will not have him to reign over them, that grieve his Spirit, and afflict his soul, by afflicting his people, in whose afflictions he is afflicted.

P S A L M CXLIV.

The four preceding psalms seem to have been penned by David before his accession to the crown, when he was persecuted by Saul; this seems to have been penned after, when he was still in trouble, (for there is no condition in this world privileged with an exemption from trouble) the neighbouring nations molesting him and giving him disturbance, especially the Philistines, 2 Sam. v. 17. In this psalm, 1. He acknowledgeth with triumph and thankfulness the great goodness of God to him in advancing him to the government, ver. 1.—4. 2. He prays to God to help him against the enemies that threatened him, ver. 5.—8. and again, ver. 11. 3. He rejoiceth in the assurance of victory over them, ver. 9, 10. 4. He prays for the prosperity of his own kingdom, and pleaseth himself with the hopes of it, ver. 12.—15. In singing this psalm we may give God the glory of our spiritual privileges and advancements, and fetch in help from him against our spiritual enemies; may pray for the prosperity of our souls; of our families, and of our land; and, in the opinion of some of the Jewish writers, may refer the psalm to the Messiah and his kingdom.

A psalm of David.

1. **B**lessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war; and my fingers to fight. 2. My goodness and my fortress; my high tower and my deliverer, my shield; and he in whom I trust: who subdueth my people under me. 3. LORD; what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him? or the son of man, that thou makest account of him? 4. Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away. 5. Bow thy heavens; O LORD; and come down: touch the mountains; and they shall smoke. 6. Cast forth lightning, and scatter them: shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them. 7. Send thine hand from above, rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children: 8. Whose mouth speaketh vanity; and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

Here, 1. David acknowledgeth his dependence upon God, and his obligations to him, ver. 1, 2. A prayer for further mercy is fitly begun with a thanksgiving for former mercy; and when we are waiting upon God to bless us, we should stir up our selves to bless him.

He gives to God the glory of two things:

(1.) What he was to him: *Blessed be the Lord my rock*, ver. 1. *my goodness, my fortress*, ver. 2. He has in the covenant engaged himself to be so, and encouraged us accordingly to depend upon him; all the saints that by faith have made him theirs, have found him not only to answer, but to outdo their expectations. David speaks it here as the matter of his trust, and that which made him easy; and the matter of his triumph, and that which made him glad, and in which he gloried. See how he multiplies words to express the satisfaction he had in God, and his interest in him. 1. He is *my strength*, on whom I stay, and from whom I have power both for my work and for my warfare; my rock to build on, to take shelter in. Even where we are weak, we may be *strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*. 2. *My goodness*; not only good to me, but my chief good, in whose favour I place my felicity, and who is the author of all the goodness that is in me, and *from whom comes every good and perfect gift*. 3. *My fortress*, and *my high tower*, in whom I think myself as safe as ever any prince thought himself in a castle or strong-hold. David had formerly sheltered himself in strong-holds at En-gedi, 1 Sam. xxiii. 29. which, perhaps, were natural fastnesses. He had lately made himself master of the strong-hold of Zion, which was fortified by art, and he *dwelt in the fort*, 2 Sam. v. 7, 9. but he depends not on these: Lord, faith he, thou art *my fortress*, and *my high tower*: The divine attributes and promises are fortifications to a believer far exceeding those either of nature or art. 4. *My deliverer*, and, as it is in the original, very emphatically, *my deliverer to me*; not only a deliverer I have interest in, but who is always nigh unto me, and makes all my deliverances turn to my real benefit. 5. *My shield*, to guard me against all the malignant darts that mine enemies let fly at me; not only *my fortress* at home, but *my shield* abroad, in the field of battle. Wherever a believer goes, he carries his protection along with him: *Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield*.

(2.) What he had done for him. He was bred a shepherd, and seems not to have been designed by his parents or himself for any thing more. But, 1. God had made him a soldier; his hands had been used to the crook, and his fingers to the harp; but God *taught his hands to war, and his fingers to fight*, because he designed him for Israel's champion; and what God calls men to, he either finds them or makes them fit for. Let the men of war give God the glory of all their military skill: the same that teacheth the meanest husbandman his art, teacheth the greatest general his. It is pity any whose fingers God hath taught to fight should fight against him, or his kingdom among men. Those have special reason to acknowledge God with thankfulness, who prove to be qualified for services which they themselves never thought of. 2. God had made him a sovereign prince, had taught him to wield the sceptre as well as the sword, to rule as well as fight, the harder and nobler art of the two. He *subdueth my people under me*. The providence of God is to be acknowledged in making people subject to their prince, and so preserving the order and benefit of societies: There was a special hand of God inclining the people of Israel to be subject to David, pursuant to the promise God had made him; and it was typical of that great act of divine grace, the bringing of souls into subjection to the Lord Jesus, and making them willing in the day of his power.

2. He admires God's condescension to man, and to him in particular, ver. 3, 4. *Lord, what is man?* what a poor little thing is he, that thou takest knowledge of him, that thou makest account of him, that he falls so much under thy cognizance and care, and that thou hast such a tender regard to any of that mean and worthless race, as thou hast had to me? Considering the many disgraces

ces which the human nature lies under, we have reason to admire the honours God has put upon mankind in general, the saints especially, some in a particular manner, as David, and upon the Messiah, to whom those words are applied, *Heb. ii. 6.* who was therefore *highly exalted because he humbled himself to be found in fashion as a man*, and therefore *has authority to execute judgment, because he is the son of man*. A question to this purpose David asked, *Psal. viii. 4.* and there he illustrated the wonder by the consideration of the great dignity God has placed man in, *ver. 5.* *Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour*. Here he illustrates it by the consideration of the meanness and mortality of man, notwithstanding the dignity put upon him, *ver. 4.* *Man is like to vanity*, so frail is he, so weak, so helpless, compassed about with so many infirmities, and his continuance here so very short and uncertain, that he is as like as may be to vanity itself: Nay, he is vanity, he is so at his best estate. *His days* have little substance in them, considering how many of the thoughts and cares of an immortal soul are employed about a poor dying body: *they are as a shadow*, dark and flitting, transitory, and finishing with the sun, and when that sets resolving itself into all shadow: *They are as a shadow that passeth away*, and there is no loss of it. David puts himself into the number of those that are thus mean and despicable.

3. He begs of God to strengthen him, and give him success against the enemies that invaded him, *ver. 5, 6, 7, 8.* He doth not specify who they were that he was in fear of, but *scatter them, destroy them*: God knew whom he meant, though he did not name them. But afterwards he describes them, *ver. 7, 8.* they are *strange children*, Philistines, aliens, ill neighbours to Israel, heathens that we are bound to be strange to, and not to make any leagues with; and that therefore they carry it strangely towards us. Notwithstanding the advantages with which God had blessed David's arms against them, yet still they were vexatious and treacherous, and men that one could put no confidence in; one cannot take their word, for their *mouth speaketh vanity*; nay, if they give their hand upon it, or offer their hand to help you, there is no trusting them; for *their right hand is a right hand of falsehood*: And against such as these we cannot defend our selves, but may depend on the God of truth and justice, that hateth falsehood, to defend us from them.

(1.) David prays, that God would appear, that he would do something extraordinary for the conviction of those who preferred their dunghil deities before the God of Israel, *ver. 5.* *Bow thy heavens, O Lord*, and make it evident that they are indeed thine, and that thou art the Lord of them, *Isa. lxiv. 1.* Let thy providence threaten mine enemies, and look black upon them, as the clouds do on the earth when they are thick and hang very low, big with a storm. Fight against those that fight against us, so that it may visibly appear, thou art for us. *Touch the mountains*, our strong and stately enemies, and let them *smoke*. Shew thy self by the ministry of thy angels, as thou didst upon mount Sinai.

(2.) That he would appear against his enemies; that he would fight from heaven against them, as sometimes he had done, by lightnings, which are his arrows, his fiery darts, against which the hardest steel is no armour of proof; so penetrating is the force of lightning. That he himself would shoot these arrows, who we are sure never misseth his mark, but hits where he aims.

(3.) That he would appear for him, *ver. 7.* He begs for their destruction in order to his own deliverance, and the repose of his people: *Send thy hand, thy power, from above*, for that way we look for help, *rid me, and deliver me, out of these great waters* that are ready to overflow me. God's time to help his people is when they are sinking, and all other helps fail.

9. I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery, and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee. 10. *It is he* that giveth salvation unto kings: who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword. 11. Rid me and deliver me from the hand of strange children; whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood. 12. That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace: 13. That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store; that our sheep may bring forth thousands, and ten thousands in our streets: 14. That our oxen may be strong to labour; that there be no breaking in, nor going out; that there be no complaining in our streets. 15. Happy is that people that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD.

The method is the same in this latter part of the psalm as in the former; he first gives glory to God, and then begs mercy from him.

1. He praises God for the experiences he had had of his goodness to him, and the encouragements he had to expect further mercy from him, *ver. 9, 10.* In the midst of his complaints con-

cerning the power and treachery of his enemies, here is a holy exultation in his God; *I will sing a new song to thee, O God*; a song of praise for new mercies, for those compassions that are new every morning. Fresh favours call for fresh returns of thanks; nay, we must praise God for the mercies we hope for by his promise, as well as those we have received by his providence, *2 Chron. xx. 20, 21.* He will join musick with his songs of praise, to express and excite his holy joy in God; he will praise God upon a *psaltery of ten strings*, in the best manner, thinking all little enough to set forth the praises of God. He tells us what this new song shall be, *ver. 10.* *It is he that giveth salvation unto kings*. This intimates, 1. That great kings cannot save themselves without him. Kings have their life-guards, and have armies at command, and all the means of safety that can be devised; but after all, it is God that gives them their salvation, and secures them by those means, which he could do, if there were occasion, without them, *Psal. xxxiii. 16.* Kings are the protectors of their people, but it is God that is their protector. How much service do they owe him then with their power, who gives them all their salvations? 2. That good kings, who are his ministers for the good of their subjects, shall be protected and saved by him. He hath engaged to give salvation to those kings that are his subjects, and rule for him; witness the great things he had done for *David his servant*, whom he had many a time *delivered from the hurtful sword*, to which Saul's malice, and his own zeal for the service of his country, had oft exposed him. This may refer to Christ, the son of David, and then it is a new song indeed, a New Testament song; God delivered him from the hurtful sword, upheld him as his servant, and brought him off a conqueror over all the powers of darkness, *Isa. xlii. 1. xlix. 8.* To him he *gave salvation*, not for himself only, but for us, raising him up to be a *horn of salvation*.

2. He prays for the continuance of God's favour.

(1.) That he might be delivered from the publick enemies, *ver. 11.* Here he repeats his prayer and plea, *ver. 7, 8.* His persecutors were still of the same character, false and perfidious, and that will certainly over-reach an honest man, and be too hard for him; therefore, Lord, do thou *deliver me from them*, for they are a strange sort of people.

(2.) That he might see the publick peace and prosperity; Lord, let us have victory, that we may have quietness; which we shall never have while our enemies have it in their power to do us mischief. David, as a king, here speaks the earnest desire he had of the welfare of his people, wherein he was a type of Christ, who provides effectually for the good of his chosen. We have here,

1. The particular instances of that publick prosperity which David desired for his people.

(1.) A hopeful progeny, *ver. 12.* *That our sons and our daughters may be* in all respects such as we could wish. He means not those only of his own family, but those of his subjects, that are the seed of the next generation. It adds much to the comfort and happiness of parents in this world, to see their children promising and likely to do well. 1. It is pleasant to see *our sons as plants grown up in their youth*, as olive-plants, *Psal. cxxviii. 3.* the *planting of the Lord*, *Isa. lxi. 3.* to see them as plants, not as weeds, not as thorns; to see them as plants growing great, not withered and blasted; to see them of a healthful constitution, a quick capacity, a towardly disposition, and especially of a pious inclination, likely to bring forth fruit unto God in their day: To see them in their youth, their growing time, increasing in every thing that is good, growing wiser and better, till they grow strong in spirit. 2. It is no less desirable to see *our daughters as corner-stones*, or corner-pillars, *polished after the similitude of a palace*, or temple. By daughters, families are united and connected to their mutual strength, as the parts of a building are by the corner-stones; and when they are graceful and beautiful both in body and mind, they are then polished after the similitude of a nice and curious structure. When we see our daughters well established and stayed with wisdom and discretion, as corner-stones are fastned in the building; when we see them by faith united to Christ, as the chief corner-stone, adorned with the graces of God's Spirit, which are the polishing of that which is naturally rough, and *become women professing godliness*; when we see them purified and consecrated to God as living temples, we think ourselves happy in them.

(2.) Great plenty: Numerous families increase the care, perhaps, more than the comfort, where there is not sufficient for their maintenance; and therefore he prays for a growing estate with a growing family. 1. That their store-houses might be well replenished with the fruits and products of the earth; *That our garners may be full*, like those of the good householder, who brings out of them things new and old; those things that are best new, he has them so; that are best when they are kept, he has them so. That we may have in them *all manner of stores*, for ourselves and our friends. That living plentifully, we may live not luxuriously, for then we abuse our plenty, but cheerfully and usefully, that having abundance we may be thankful to God, generous to our friends, and charitable to the poor; otherwise what profit is it to have *our garners full*? *Jam. v. 3.* 2. That their flocks might greatly increase: *That our sheep may bring forth thousands, and ten thousands in our folds*. Much of the wealth of their country consisted in their flocks, *Prov. xxvii. 26.* and of ours too, else wool would not

not be, as it is, a staple commodity. The increase of our cattle is a blessing in which God is to be acknowledged. 3. That their beasts designed for service, might be fit for it: *That our oxen may be strong to labour* in the plow; *that they may be fat and fleshy*, so some; in good laborious case. We were none of us made to be idle, and therefore we should pray for bodily health, not that we may be easy, and take our pleasures, but that we *may be strong to labour*, that we may do the work of our place and day, else we are worse than the beasts; for when they are strong, it is for labour.

(3.) An uninterrupted peace. 1. That there be no war; *no breaking in* of invaders, *no going out* of deserters. Let not our enemies break in upon us; let us not have occasion to march out against them. War brings with it abundance of mischiefs, whether it be offensive or defensive. 2. That there be no oppression or faction, *no complaining in our streets*: That the people may have no cause to complain, either of their government or of one another; nor may be so peevish as to complain without cause. It is desirable thus to dwell in quiet habitations.

2. His reflection upon this description of the prosperity of the nation, which he so much desired, *ver. 15. Happy is the people that is in such a case*; but it is seldom so, and never long so; *yea, happy is the people whose God is the Lord*. The relation of a people to God as theirs, is here spoken of, either, 1. As that which is the fountain of all these blessings, from whence they flow. Happy is Israel, if they faithfully adhere to the Lord as their God, for they may expect to be *in such a case*. National piety commonly brings national prosperity; for nations, as such, in their national capacity, are capable of rewards and punishments only in this life. Or, 2. As that which is abundantly preferable to all these enjoyments. The psalmist began to say, as most do, *Happy is the people that is in such a case*; they are blessed that prosper in the world; but he immediately corrects himself, *yea rather, Happy is the people whose God is the Lord*, that have his favour, and love, and grace, according to the tenor of the covenant, though they have not abundance of this world's goods. As all this, and much more cannot make us happy, unless the Lord be our God; so the want of this, the loss of this, nay, the reverse of this, cannot make us miserable, if he be.

P S A L M CXLV.

The five foregoing psalms were all of a piece, all full of prayers; this and the five that follow it to the end of the book, are all of a piece too, all full of praises; and though this only is entitled David's psalm, yet we have no reason to think but that they were all his as well as all the foregoing prayers. And it is observable, 1. That after five psalms of prayer, follow six psalms of praise; for those that are much in prayer shall not want matter for praise; and those that have sped in prayer, must abound in praise. Our thanksgivings for mercy when we have received it, should even exceed our supplications for it when we were in pursuit of it. David in the last of his begging psalms had promised to praise God, Psalm cxliv. 9. and here he performs his promise. 2. That the book of Psalms concludes with psalms of praise, all praise, for praise is the conclusion of the whole matter, it is that in which all the psalms centre. And it intimates, that God's people towards the end of their life should abound much in praise, and the rather, because at the end of their life they hope to remove to the world of everlasting praise; and the nearer they come to heaven, the more they should accustom themselves to the work of heaven. This is one of those psalms which are composed alphabetically, as Psal. xxv. and xxxiv. &c. that it might be the easier committed to memory, and kept in mind. The Jewish writers justly extol this psalm as a star of the first magnitude in this bright constellation; and some of them have an extravagant saying concerning it, not much unlike some of the popish superstitions, That whosoever will sing this psalm constantly three times a day, shall certainly be happy in the world to come. In this psalm, 1. David engageth himself and others to praise God, ver. 1, 2, 4,—7, 10,—12. 2. He fastens upon those things that are proper matter for praise; God's greatness, ver. 3. His goodness, ver. 8, 9. The proofs of both in the administration of his kingdom, ver. 13. The kingdom of providence, ver. 14,—16. The kingdom of grace, ver. 17,—20. And then he concludes with a resolution to continue praising God, ver. 21. with which resolution our hearts must be filled and fixed in singing this psalm.

¶ Davids psalm of praise.

1. **I** Will extol thee, my God, O King, and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. 2. Every day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy name for ever and ever: 3. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable. 4. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts. 5. I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works. 6. And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness. 7. They shall

abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness: 8. The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. 9. The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works:

The entitling of this David's psalm of praise, may intimate not only that he was the penman of it, but that he took a particular pleasure in it, and sung it often; it was his companion wherever he went. In this former part of the psalm God's glorious attributes are praised; as in the latter part of the psalm his kingdom and the administration of it.

Observe, 1. Who shall be employed in giving glory to God.

(1.) Whatever others do, the psalmist will himself be much in praising God. To this good work he here excites himself, engageth himself, and hath his heart much enlarged in it. What he doth, that he will do, having more and more satisfaction in it; it was his duty, it was his delight. Observe, 1. How he expresseth the work itself; *I will extol thee, and bless thy name*; ver. 1. *i. e.* I will speak well of thee, as thou hast made thy self known, and will therein express my own high thoughts of thee, and endeavour to raise the like in others. When we speak honourably of God, this is graciously interpreted and accepted as an extolling of him. Again, ver. 2. *I will bless thee, I will praise thy name*; the repetition intimates the fervency of his affection to this work, the fixedness of his purpose to abound in it, and the frequency of his performances therein. Again, ver. 5. *I will speak of thine honour*; and, ver. 6. *I will declare thy greatness*: He would give glory to God, not only in his solemn devotions, but in his common conversation. If the heart be full of God, out of the abundance of that the mouth will speak with reverence to his praise, upon all occasions. What subject of discourse can we find more noble, more copious, more pleasant, useful, and unexceptionable, than the glory of God? 2. How he expresseth his resolution to persevere in it. (1.) He will be constant to this work: *Every day will I bless thee*. Praising God must be our daily work: No day must pass, though never so busy a day, though never so sorrowful a day, without praising God: we ought to reckon it the most needful of our daily business, and the most delightful of our daily comforts. God is every day blessing us, doing well for us, there is therefore reason we should be every day blessing him, speaking well of him. (2.) He will continue in it: *I will bless thee for ever and ever*, ver. 1. and again, ver. 2. This intimates, 1. That he resolved to continue in this work to the end of his life, throughout his ever in this world. 2. That the psalms he penned should be made use of in praising God by the church to the end of time, 2 Chron. xxix. 30. 3. That he hoped to be praising God to all eternity in the other world: They that make it their constant work on earth, shall have it their everlasting bliss in heaven.

(2.) He doubts not but others also would be forward to this work. 1. They shall concur in it now; they shall join with me in it; when *I declare thy greatness, men shall speak of it*, ver. 6. *they shall abundantly utter it*, ver. 7. or *pour it out*, as the word is; they shall praise God with a gracious fluency, better than the most curious oratory. David's zeal would provoke many, and it has done so. 2. They shall keep it up when I am gone, in an uninterrupted succession, ver. 4. *One generation shall praise thy works to another*. The generation that is going off shall tell them to that which is rising up, shall tell them what they have seen in their days, and what they have heard from their fathers; they shall fully and particularly declare thy mighty acts, Psalm lxxviii. 3. and the generation that is rising up, shall follow the example of that which is going off; so that the death of God's worshippers shall be no diminution of his worship; for a new generation shall rise up in their room to carry on that good work, more or less, to the end of time, when it shall be left to that world to do it in in which there is no succession of generations.

2. What we must give to God the glory of.

(1.) Of his greatness, and his great works. We must declare, that *Great is the Lord*, his presence infinite, his power irresistible, his brightness insupportable, his majesty awful, his dominion boundless, and his sovereignty uncontested; and therefore there is no dispute but *great is the Lord*, and, if great, then *greatly to be praised*, with all that is within us, to the utmost of our power, and with all the circumstances of solemnity imaginable. His greatness indeed cannot be comprehended, for it is unsearchable; who can conceive or express how great God is? But then it is so much the more to be praised; when we cannot by searching find the bottom, we must sit down at the brink, and adore the depth, Rom. xi. 33. God is great, for, 1. His majesty is glorious in the upper world, above the heavens, where he hath set his glory; and when we are declaring his greatness, we must not fail to *speak of the glorious honour of his majesty*, the splendor of the glory of his majesty, ver. 5. How bright he shines in the upper world, so as to dazzle the eyes of the angels themselves, and oblige them to cover their faces, as unable to bear the lustre of it! 2. His works are wondrous in this lower world; the preservation, maintenance and government of all the creatures, speak the Creator very great: When therefore we declare his greatness, we must observe the unquestion-

able proofs of it, and must declare his mighty acts, ver. 4. *Speak of his wondrous works*, ver. 5. *the might of his terrible acts*, ver. 6. We must see God acting and working in all the affairs of this lower world; various instruments are used, but in all events God is the supreme director; it is he that performeth all things. Much of his power is seen in the operations of his providence; they are mighty acts, such as cannot be paralleled by the strength of any creature; and much of his justice; they are terrible acts, awful to fains, dreadful to finners. These we should take all occasions to speak of, and observe the finger of God, his hand, his arm in all, that we may marvel.

(2.) Of his goodness; this is his glory, *Exod. xxxiii. 19.* it is what he glories in, *Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.* and it is what we must give him the glory of. *They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness*, ver. 7. God's goodness is great goodness, the treasures of it can never be exhausted; nay, they can never be lessened, for he ever will be as rich in mercy as he ever was. It is memorable goodness, it is what we ought always to lay before us, always to have in mind, and preserve the memorials of; for it is *worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance*: and the memory we have, the remembrance we retain of God's goodness, we should utter, we should abundantly utter, as those that are full of it, that are very full of it, and desire that others may be acquainted and affected with it. But whenever we utter God's great goodness, we must not forget at the same time to sing of his righteousness; for as he is gracious in rewarding those that serve him faithfully, so he is righteous in punishing those that rebel against him. Impartial and inflexible justice is as surely in God, as inexhaustible goodness; and we must sing of both together, *Rom. xi. 22.*

1. There is a fountain of goodness in God's nature, ver. 8. *The Lord is gracious* to those that serve him, he is *full of compassion* to those that need him, *slow to anger* to those that have offended him, and of *great mercy* to all that seek him, and sue to him. He is ready to give, and ready to forgive, more ready than we are to ask, than we are to repent.

2. There are streams of goodness in all the dispensations of his providence, ver. 9. As he is good, so he doth good; he is good to all, to all his creatures; from the highest angels to the meanest worm; to all but devils and damned sinners, that have shut themselves out from his goodness. *His tender mercies are over all his works*, i. e. 1. All his works, all his creatures, receive the fruits of his merciful care and bounty; it is extended to them all, he hateth nothing that he has made. 2. The works of his mercy outshone all his other works, and declare him more than any of them. In nothing will the glory of God be for ever so illustrious, as in the vessels of mercy ordained to glory. To the divine goodness will the everlasting hallelujahs of all the fains be sung.

10. All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD: and thy fains shall bless thee. 11. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power. 12. To make known to the sons of men, his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom. 13. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations. 14. The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down. 15. The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. 16. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. 17. The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. 18. The LORD is high unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. 19. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them. 20. The LORD preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy. 21. My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD: and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.

The greatness and goodness of him who is the greatest and best of beings (*optimus & maximus*) were celebrated in the former part of the psalm; here, in these verses, we are taught to give him the glory of his kingdom, in the administration of which his greatness and goodness shine so clear, so very bright. Observe, as before,

1. From whom the tribute of praise is expected, ver. 10. *All God's works shall praise him*; they all minister to us matter for praise, and so praise him according to their capacity; even those that refuse to give him honour, he will get him honour upon: but his fains do bless him, not only as they have peculiar blessings from him which other creatures have not, but as they praise him actively, while his other works praise him only objectively. They bless him, for they collect the rent and tribute of praise from the inferior creatures, and pay it into the treasury above. *All God's works do praise him*, as the beautiful building praiseth the builder; or the well-drawn picture praiseth the painter: But his fains bless him as the children of prudent, tender parents rise up and call them

blessed. Of all God's works, his fains, the workmanship of his grace, the first-fruits of his creatures, have most reason to bless him.

2. For what this praise is to be given; *They shall speak of thy kingdom*. The kingdom of God among men is a thing to be oft thought of, and oft spoke of. As before he had magnified God's greatness and goodness in general, so here he magnifies them with application to his kingdom. Consider then,

(1.) The greatness of his kingdom; it is great indeed, for all the kings and kingdoms of the earth are under his control. To shew the greatness of God's kingdom, he observes, 1. The pomp of it: Would we by faith look within the veil, we should see, and believing, we should speak of the glory of his kingdom, ver. 11. *the glorious majesty of it*, ver. 12. for he hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and it is high and lifted up; and surrounded with an innumerable company of angels. The courts of Solomon and Ahasuerus were magnificent; but, compared with the glorious majesty of God's kingdom, they were but as glow-worms to the sun. The consideration of this should strike an awe upon us in all our approaches to God. 2. The power of it: When they speak of the glory of God's kingdom, they must talk of his power, the extent of it, the efficacy of it; his power, by which he can do any thing, and doth every thing he pleaseth, ver. 11: and as a proof of it, let them make known his mighty acts, ver. 12. that the sons of men may be invited to yield themselves his willing subjects, and so put themselves under the protection of such a mighty potentate. 3. The perpetuity of it, ver. 13. The thrones of earthly princes totter, and the flowers of their crowns wither, monarchies come to an end; but, Lord, *Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom*. God will govern the world to the end of time, when the Mediator, who is now entrusted with the administration of his kingdom, shall deliver it up to God, even the Father, that he may be all in all to eternity. His dominion endureth throughout all generations, for he himself is eternal, and his counsels unchangeable and uniform; and Satan, who hath set up a kingdom in opposition to him, is conquered and in a chain.

(2.) The goodness of his kingdom. His royal stile and title is, *The Lord God, gracious and merciful*; and his government answers his title. The goodness of God appears in what he doth,

1. For all the creatures in general, ver. 15, 16. He provides food for all flesh, and therein appears his everlasting mercy, *Psal. cxxxvi. 25.* All the creatures live upon God, and as they had their being from him at first, so from him they have all the supports of their being, and on him they depend for the continuance of it. (1.) The eye of their expectation attends upon him: *The eyes of all wait on thee*. The inferior creatures indeed have not the knowledge of God, nor are capable of it, and yet they are said to wait upon God, because they seek their food according to the instinct which the God of nature hath put into them; and they sow not, neither do they reap, *Matt. vi. 26.* and because they take what the God of nature hath provided for them, in the time and way that he hath appointed, and are content with it. (2.) The hand of his bounty is stretched out unto them. *Thou givest them their meat in due season*: the meat proper for them, and in the proper time, when they need it; so that none of the creatures ordinarily perish for want of food, no not in the winter. *Thou openest thy hand freely and liberally, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing*; except some of the unreasonable children of men, that will be satisfied with nothing, but are still complaining, still crying, Give, give.

2. For the children of men in particular, whom he governs as reasonable creatures.

(1.) He doth none of them any wrong, for, ver. 17. *The Lord is righteous in all his ways*, and not unrighteous in any of them; he is holy, and acts like himself, with a perfect rectitude in all his works. In all the acts of government he is just, injurious to none, but administering justice to all. *The ways of the Lord are equal*, though ours are unequal. In giving laws, in deciding controversies, in recompensing services, and punishing offences, he is uncontestably just, and we are bound to own it.

(2.) He doth all of them good, his own people in a special manner. 1. He supports those that are sinking, and it is his honour to help the weak, ver. 14. He *upholdeth all that fall*, in that though they fall, they are not utterly cast down. Many of the children of men are brought very low by sickness and other distresses, and seem ready to drop into the grave, and yet providence wonderfully upholds them, raiseth them up, and saith, *Return*, *Psal. xc. 3.* If all had died that were dying, the world would have been very thin. Many of the children of God that have been ready to fall into sin, to fall into despair, have experienced his goodness in preventing their falls, or recovering them speedily by his graces and comforts, so that though they fell, they were not utterly cast down, *Psal. xxxvii. 24.* If those that are bowed down by oppression and affliction be raised up, it was God that raised them: And all those that are heavy laden under the burthen of sin, if they come to Christ by faith, he will ease them, he will raise them. 2. He is very ready to hear and answer the prayers of his people, ver. 18, 19. In this appears the grace of his kingdom, that his subjects have not only liberty of petitioning, but all the encouragement that can be to petition. (1.) The grant is very rich, that

God will be *nigh to all that call upon him*; he will be always within call of their prayers, and they shall always find themselves within reach of his help. If a neighbour that is near is better than a brother afar off, Psalm xxvii. 10. much more a God that is near. Nay, he will not only be *nigh to them*, that they may have the satisfaction of being heard, but *he will fulfil their desires*; they shall have what they ask, and find what they seek. It was said, ver. 16. that he *satisfies the desire of every living thing*; much more will he fulfil the desire of them that fear him: for he that feeds his birds will not starve his babes. *He will hear their call, and will save them*; that is hearing them to purpose as he heard David, i. e. saved him from the horn of the unicorn, Psalm xxii. 21. (2.) The proviso is very reasonable; he will hear and help us; 1. If we fear him, if we worship and serve him with a holy awe of him; for otherwise, how can we expect that he should accept us? 2. If we call upon him in truth; for he desires that in the inward part we must be faithful to God, and sincere in our professions of dependence on him, and devotedness to him. In all devotions, inward impressions must be answerable to the outward expressions, else they are not performed in truth. 3. He takes them under his special protection that have a confidence and complacency in him, ver. 20. *The Lord preserveth all them that love him*; they lie exposed in this world, but he by preserving them in their integrity will effectually secure them, that no real evil shall befall them.

3. If any are destroyed they may thank themselves: *All the wicked he will destroy*, but they have by their wickedness fitted themselves for destruction. This magnifies his goodness in the protection of the righteous, that *with those eyes they shall see the reward of the wicked*, Psalm xci. 8. and God will by this means preserve his people, even by destroying the wicked that would do them a mischief.

Lastly, The psalmist concludes, 1. With a resolution to give glory to God himself, ver. 21. *My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord*. When we have said what we can in praising God, still there is more to be said, and therefore we must not only begin our thanksgivings with this purpose, as he did, ver. 1. but conclude them with it, as he doth here, because we shall presently have occasion to begin again. As the end of one mercy is the beginning of another, so should the end of our thanksgiving be: While I have breath to draw, my mouth shall still speak God's praises. 2. With a call to others to do so too: *Let all flesh, all mankind, bless his holy name for ever and ever*. Some of mankind shall be blessing God for ever, it is pity but they should be all so.

P S A L M CXLVI.

This and all the rest of the psalms that follow, begin and end with Hallelujah, a word which puts much of God's praise into a little compass; for in it we praise him by his name Jah, the contraction of Jehovah. In this excellent psalm of praise, 1. The psalmist engageth himself to praise God, ver. 1, 2. 2. He engageth others to trust in him, which is one necessary and acceptable way of praising him: And, (1.) He shews why we should not trust in men, ver. 3, 4. (2.) Why we should trust in God, ver. 5. Because of his power in the kingdom of nature, ver. 6. His dominion in the kingdom of providence, ver. 7. And his grace in the kingdom of the Messiah, ver. 8, 9. that everlasting kingdom, ver. 10. to which many of the Jewish writers refer this psalm, and to which therefore we should have an eye in the singing of it.

1. **P**RAISE ye the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul. 2. While I live, will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God, while I have any being. 3. Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. 4. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth: in that very day his thoughts perish.

David is supposed to have penned this psalm; and he was himself a prince, a mighty prince, and as such it might be thought,

1. That he should be exempted from the service of praising God, that it was enough for him to see that his priests and people did it, but that he needed not to do it himself in his own person; Michal thought it a disparagement to him to dance before the ark; but he was so far from being of this mind, that he will himself be first and foremost in the work, ver. 1, 2. He thinks his dignity is so far from excusing him from it, that it rather obliged him to lead in it; and that it was so far from lessening him, that it really magnified him; therefore he stirs up himself to it, and to make a business of it. *Praise the Lord, O my soul*; and resolves to abide by it; I will praise him with my heart, I will sing praises to him with my mouth. Herein I will have an eye to him as the Lord, infinitely blessed and glorious in himself, and as my God, in covenant with me. Then praise is most pleasant, when in praising God we have an eye to him as ours, whom we have an interest in, and stand in relation to. This I will do constantly while I live, every day of my life, and to my life's end; nay, I will do it while I have any being, for when I have no being on earth, I hope to have a being in heaven, a better being, to be

doing it better. That which is the great end of our being, ought to be our great enjoyment and employment, while we have any being; in thee must our time and powers be spent.

2. It might be thought that he himself having been so great a blessing to his country, should be adored, according to the usage of the heathen nations, who deified their heroes; that they should all come and trust in his shadow, and make him their stay and strong hold. No, saith, David; *Put not your trust in princes*; ver. 3. not in me, not in any other; do not repose your confidence in them; do not raise your expectations from them. Be not too sure of their sincerity; some have thought they know the better how to reign, by knowing how to dissemble; be not too sure of their constancy and fidelity, it is possible they may both change their minds; and break their words. But though we suppose them very wise and good as David himself, yet we must not be too sure of their ability and continuance, for they are sons of Adam, weak and mortal. There is indeed a Son of man in whom there is help; there is salvation, and who will not fail those that trust in him. But all other sons of men are like the man they are sprung of, who being in honour, did not abide.

(1.) We cannot be sure of their ability, even the power of kings may be so straitened, cramped, and weakened, that they may not be in a capacity to do that for us which we expect, David himself owned, 2 Sam. iii. 39. *I am this day weak, though anointed king*. So that in the son of man oftentimes, there is no help, no salvation; he is at a loss, at his wit's end, as a man astonished, and then though a mighty man, he cannot save, Jer. xiv. 9.

(2.) We cannot be sure of their continuance: Suppose he has it in his power to help us while he lives, yet he may be suddenly taken off when we expect most from him, ver. 4. *His breath goeth forth*, so it doth every moment, and comes back again, but that is an intimation that it will shortly go for good and all, and then he returneth to his earth: It is his in respect of his original, as a man, the earth out of which he was taken, and to which therefore he must return, according to the sentence, Gen. iii. 19. It is his if he be a worldly man, in respect of choice, his earth which he hath chosen for his portion, and on the things of which he hath set his affections: He shall go to his own place. Or, rather, it is his earth, because of the property he has in it, and tho' he has had large possessions on earth, a grave is all that will remain to him. *The earth God has given to the children of men*, and great striving there is about it, and as a mark of their authority, men call their lands by their own names. But after a while there is no part of the earth will be their own, but that in which the dead body shall make its bed, and that shall be theirs while the earth remaineth. But when he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish; all the projects and designs he had of kindness to us, vanished and are gone; and he cannot take one step further in them; all his purposes are cut off and buried with him, Job xvii. 11. And then what comes of our expectations from him? Princes are mortal as much as other men, and therefore we cannot have that assurance of help from them which we may have from that potentate which hath immortality. *Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils*, and will not be there long.

5. Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God: 6. Which made heaven and earth, the sea and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever: 7. Which executeth judgment for the oppressed, which giveth food to the hungry: the LORD looseth the prisoners. 8. The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind; the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous. 9. The LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down. 10. The LORD shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the LORD.

The psalmist having cautioned us not to trust in princes, because if we do, we shall be miserably disappointed, here encourageth us to put our confidence in God, because if we do so, we shall be happily secured. *Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help*, that has an interest in his attributes and promises, and has them engaged for him; and whose hope is in the Lord his God. Those shall have God for their help. 1. That take him for their God, and serve and worship him accordingly. 2. That have their hope in him, and like a life of dependence upon him; that have good thoughts of him, and encourage themselves in him, when all other supports fail. Every believer may look upon him as the God of Jacob, of the church in general, and therefore may expect relief from him, in reference to publick distresses, and as his God in particular, and therefore may depend upon him in all personal wants and straits. We must hope, 1. In the providence of God for all the good things we need, which relate to the life that now is. 2. In the grace of Christ for all the good things which relate to the life that is to come. To this, especially,

the learned Dr. Hammond refers this, and the following verses, looking upon the latter part of this psalm, to have a most visible remarkable aspect, upon the eternal Son of God in his incarnation. He quotes one of the rabbins, who saith of *ver. 10.* that it belongs to the days of the Messiah. And that it doth so, he thinks will appear by comparing, *ver. 7, 8.* with the characters Christ gives of the Messiah, *Matth. xi. 5, 6.* *The blind receive their sight, the lame walk;* and the closing words there, *Blessed is he who-so-ever shall not be offended in me,* he thinks may very well be supposed to refer to *ver. 5.* *Happy is the man that hopes in the Lord his God,* and who is not offended in him.

Let us take a view of the mighty encouragements here given us, to hope in the Lord our God.

1. He is the *maker of the world*, and therefore has all power in himself, and the command of the powers of all the creatures, which being derived from him, depend upon him, *ver. 6.* *He made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is,* and therefore his arm is not shortned, that it cannot save. It is very applicable to Christ, by whom God made the world, and *without whom, was not any thing made that was made.* It is a great support to faith, that the Redeemer of the world is the same that was the Creator of it, and therefore has a good will to it, a perfect knowledge of its case, and power to help it.

2. He is a God of inviolable fidelity. We may venture to take God's word, for he *keepeth truth for ever*, and therefore no word of his shall fall to the ground; it is true *from the beginning*, and therefore true *to the end.* Our Lord Jesus is the Amen, *the faithful witness*, as well as *the beginning*, the author and principle of the creation of God, *Rev. iii. 14.* The keeping of God's truth for ever is committed to him, for *all the promises* are in him *yea and Amen.*

3. He is the *patron of injured innocency.* He *pleadeth the cause of the oppressed*, and (as we read it) he *executeth judgment* for them. He often doth it in his providence, righting those that suffer wrong, and clearing up their integrity; he will do it in the judgment of the great day. The Messiah came to rescue the children of men out of the hands of Satan the great oppressor, and all judgment being committed to him, the executing of judgment upon persecutors, is so among the rest, *Jude 15.*

4. He is a bountiful benefactor to the necessitous. He *giveth food to the hungry*; so God doth in an ordinary way for the answering of the cravings of nature; so he has done sometimes in an extraordinary way, as when ravens fed Elijah; so Christ did more than once, when he fed thousands miraculously, with that which was intended but for one meal or two for his own family; this encourageth to hope in him as the nourisher of our souls with the bread of life.

5. He is the author of liberty to those that were bound; *The Lord looseth the prisoners.* He brought Israel out of the house of bondage in Egypt, and afterwards in Babylon. The miracles Christ wrought in making the dumb to speak, and the deaf to hear, with that one word, *Ephphrata, be opened*; his cleansing of lepers, and so discharging them from their confinement, and his raising the dead out of their graves, may all be included in this one of *loosing the prisoners*; and we may take encouragement in those to hope in him, for that spiritual liberty which he came to proclaim, *Isa. lxi. 1, 2.*

6. He giveth sight to those that have been long deprived of it. *The Lord can open the eyes of the blind*, and has often given to his afflicted people, to see that comfort, which before they were not aware of, *Gen. xxi. 19.* and the prophets servant, *2 Kings vi. 17.* But this has special reference to Christ, for *since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind*, till Christ did it, *John ix. 32.* and thereby encouraged us to hope in him for spiritual illumination.

7. He sets that straight that was crooked, and makes those easy that were pained and ready to sink; he *raiseth them that are bowed down*, by comforting and supporting them under their burthens, and in due time removing their burthens. This was literally performed by Christ when he made a poor woman straight that had been *bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself*, *Luke xiii. 12.* and he still doth it by his grace, giving rest to them that were weary and heavy laden, and raising up with his comforts those that were humbled and cast down by convictions.

8. He has a constant kindness for all good people, *the Lord loveth the righteous*, and they may with the more confidence depend upon his power when they are sure of his good will. Our Lord Jesus shewed his love to the righteous, *by fulfilling all righteousness.*

9. He has a tender concern for those that stand in special need of his care: *The Lord preserveth the strangers.* It ought not to pass without remark, that the name Jehovah is repeated here five times in five lines, to intimate that it is an almighty power, that of Jehovah, that is engaged and exerted for the relief of the oppressed; and that it is as much the glory of God to succour them that are in misery, as it is to ride on the heavens by his name, *Jah, Psal. lxviii. 4.* (1.) Strangers are exposed, and are commonly destitute of friends, but *the Lord preserveth them*, that they be not run down and ruined. Many a poor stranger has found the benefit of the divine protection, and been kept alive by it. (2.) Widows and fa-

therless children, that have lost the head of the family, who took care of the affairs of it, often fall into the hands of those that make a prey of them, that will not do them right, nay, that will do them wrong, but *the Lord releiveth them* and raiseth up friends for them. See *Exod. xxii. 22, 23.* Our Lord Jesus came into the world to help the helpless, to receive Gentiles, strangers into his kingdom, and that with him poor sinners, that are as fatherless, may find mercy, *Hof. xiv. 3.*

10. He will appear for the destruction of all those that oppose his kingdom, and oppress the faithful subjects of it; *The way of the wicked he turneth upside down*, and therefore let us *hope in him*, and not be *afraid of the fury of the oppressor*, as though he were ready to destroy. It is the glory of the Messiah, that he will subvert all the counsels of hell and earth that militate against his church, so that having him for us, we need not fear any thing that can be done against us.

11. His kingdom shall continue through all the revolutions of time, to the utmost ages of eternity, *ver. 10.* Let this encourage us to trust in God at all times, that *the Lord shall reign for ever* in spite of all the malignity of the powers of darkness, *even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations.* Christ is set king on the holy hill of Zion, and his kingdom shall continue in an endless glory. It cannot be destroyed by an invader, it shall not be left to a successor, either to a succeeding monarch, or a succeeding monarchy, but it shall stand for ever. It is matter of unspeakable comfort, that *the Lord reigns* as Zion's God, as Zion's King, that the Messiah is head over all things to the church, and will be so while the world stands.

P S A L M CXLVII.

This is another psalm of praise; some think it was penned after the return of the Jews from their captivity; but it is so much of a piece with Psal. cxlv. that I rather think it was penned by David, and what is said, *ver. 2, 13.* may well enough be applied to the first building and fortifying of Jerusalem in his time, and the gathering in of those that had been out-casts in Saul's time. The Septuagint divide it into two; and we may divide it into the first and second part, but both of the same import. 1. We are called upon to praise God, *ver. 1, 7, 12.* 2. We are furnished with matter for praise, for God is to be glorified. (1.) As the God of nature, and so he is very great, *ver. 4, 5, 8, 9, 15.—18.* (2.) As the God of grace comforting his people, *ver. 3, 6.—10.* 11. (3.) As the God of Israel, Jerusalem and Zion, settling their civil state, *ver. 2, 13, 14.* and especially settling religion among them, *ver. 19, 20.* It is easy in singing this psalm to apply it to ourselves, both as to personal and national mercies, were it but as easy to do it with suitable affections.

PRAISE ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is comely. 2. The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the out-casts of Israel. 3. He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. 4. He telleth the number of the stars: he calleth them all by their names. 5. Great is our LORD and of great power: his understanding is infinite. 6. The LORD lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground. 7. Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving: sing praise upon the harp unto our God: 8. Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. 9. He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry. 10. He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. 11. The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

Here, 1. The duty of praise is recommended to us. It is not without reason, that we are thus called to it again and again; *praise ye the Lord*, *ver. 1.* and again, *ver. 7.* *Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving, sing praise upon the harp to our God*, let all our praises be directed to him and centre in him; for it is good to do it; it is our duty, and therefore good in itself; it is our interest, and therefore good for us: It is acceptable to our Creator, and it answers the end of our creation. The law for it is holy, just and good, the practice of it will turn to a good account. It is good, for, (1.) It is pleasant; holy joy and delight is required as the principle of it, and that is pleasant to us as men; giving glory to God is the design and business of it, and that is pleasant to us, as saints that are devoted to his honour. Praising God is work that is its own wages, it is heaven upon earth, it is what we should be in, as in our element. (2.) It is comely, it is that which becomes us as reasonable creatures, much more as people in covenant with God. In giving honour to God, we really do ourselves a great deal of honour.

2. God is recommended to us as the proper object of our most exalted and enlarged praises, upon several accounts.

(1.) The care he takes of his chosen people, *ver. 2.* Is Jerusalem to be raised out of small beginnings? Is it to be recovered out of its ruins? In both cases, *The Lord builds up Jerusalem.* The gospel-church, the Jerusalem that is from above, is of his building, he framed the model of it in his own counsels, he founded it by the preaching of his gospel, he adds to it daily such as shall be saved, and so increaseth it. He will build it up unto perfection, build it up as high as heaven. Are any of his people out-casts? Have they made themselves so by their own folly? He gathers them by giving them repentance, and bringing them again into the communion of saints. Have they been forced out by war, famine or persecution? He opens a door for their return; many that were missing, and thought to be lost, are brought back, and they that were scattered in the cloudy and dark day, are gathered together again.

(2.) The comforts he has laid up for true penitents, *ver. 3.* They are *broken in heart*, and wounded, humbled and troubled for sin, inwardly pained at the remembrance of it, as a man is that is sorely wounded. Their very hearts are not only pricked, but rent under the sense of the dishonour they have done to God, and the injury they have done to themselves by sin. Those God heals with the consolations of his Spirit, he speaks peace to them, assures them that their sins are pardoned, and that he is reconciled to them, and so makes them easy, pours the balm of Gilead into the bleeding wounds, and then binds them up, and makes them to rejoice. They that have had experience of this, need not be called upon to praise the Lord, for when he brought them out of the horrible pit, and set their feet upon a rock, he put a new song into their mouths, Psal. xl. 2, 3. And for this let others praise him also.

(3.) The sovereign dominion he has over the lights of heaven, *ver. 4, 5.* The stars are innumerable, many of them being scarce discernable with the naked eye, and yet he counts them, and knows the exact number of them, for they are all the work of his hands, and the instruments of his providence; their bulk and power is very great, but *he calleth them all by their names*, which speaks his dominion over them, and the command he has them at, to make what use of them he pleaseth. They are his servants, his foldiers, he musters them, he marshals them, they come and go at his bidding, and all their motions are under his direction. He mentions this as one instance of many, to shew that *great is our Lord, and of great power*, he can do what he pleaseth, and of his understanding there is no computation, so that he can contrive every thing for the best. Man's knowledge is soon drained, and you have his utmost length, hitherto his wisdom can reach and no further; but God's knowledge is a depth that can never be fathomed.

(4.) The pleasure he takes in humbling the proud, and exalting them of low degree, *ver. 6.* *The Lord lifteth up the meek* that abase themselves before him, and whom men trample on; but *the wicked* that carry it insolently towards God, and scornfully towards all mankind, that lift up themselves in pride and folly, he *casteth them down to the ground*, sometimes by very humbling providences in this world, however, in the day when their faces shall be filled with everlasting shame. God proves himself to be God, by looking on the proud and abasing them, Job xl. 12.

(5.) The provision he makes for the inferior creatures. Though he is so great as to command the stars, he is so good as not to forget even the fowls, *ver. 8, 9.* Observe in what method he feeds man and beast. (1.) *He covereth the heaven with clouds* which darken the air, and intercept the beams of the sun, and yet in them he *prepareth that rain for the earth*, which is necessary to its fruitfulness. Clouds look melancholy, and yet without them we could have no rain, and consequently no fruit. Thus afflictions for the present look black and dark and unpleasant, and we are in heaviness, because of them, as sometimes when the sky is overcast it makes us dull; but they are necessary, for from these clouds of affliction come those showers that make the harvest to yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness, Heb. xii. 11. which should help to reconcile us to them. Observe the necessary dependence which the earth has upon the heavens, which directs us on earth to depend on God in heaven. All the rain with which the earth is watered, is of God's preparing. (2.) By the rain which distills on the earth, he *makes grass to grow upon the mountains*, even the high mountains, which man neither takes care of, nor reaps the benefit of. The mountains that are not watered with the springs and rivers, as the vallies are, yet are watered so as they are not barren. (3.) This grass he *gives to the beast for his food*, the beasts of the mountains that run wild, which man makes no provision for. And even the *young ravens* that being forsaken by their old ones, cry, that cry he hears, and finds out ways to feed them, so that they are kept from perishing in the nest.

(6.) The complacency he takes in his people, *ver. 10, 11.* In times when great things are a doing, and there are great expectations of the success of them, it concerns us to know (since the issue proceedeth from the Lord) who they are, and what that is which God will delight to honour, and crown with victory. It is not the strength of armies, but the strength of grace, that

God is pleased to own. (1.) Not the strength of armies; not in the cavalry, *for he delighteth not in the strength of the horse*, the war-horse, noted for his courage, Job xxxix. 19, &c. nor in the infantry, for he *taketh no pleasure in the legs of a man*; he doth not mean the swiftness of them for flight, to quit the field, but the steadiness of them, for charging, to stand the ground. If one king making war with another king, goes to God to pray for success, it will not avail him to plead, Lord, I have a gallant army, the horse and foot in good order, it is pity they should suffer any disgrace; for that is no argument with God, Psal. xx. 7. Jehoshaphat's was much better, *Lord, we have no might*, 2 Chron. xx. 12. But (2.) God is pleased to own the strength of grace; a serious and suitable regard to God, is that which is in the sight of God of great price in such a case. The Lord accepts of, and takes pleasure in those that *fear him, and that hope in his mercy*. Observe, 1. A holy fear of God, and hope in God, not only may consist, but must concur. In the same heart, at the same time there must be both a reverence of his majesty, and a complacency in his goodness; both a believing dread of his wrath, and a believing expectation of his favour. Not that we must hang in suspense between hope and fear, but must act under the gracious influences of hope and fear. Our fear must save our hope from swelling into presumption, and our hope must save our fear from sinking into despair; thus must we take our work before us. 2. We must *hope in God's mercy*, his general mercy, even then when we cannot find a particular promise to stay ourselves upon. An humble confidence in the goodness of God's nature, is very pleasing to him, as that which turns to the glory of that attribute of his which he most glories in. Even a man of honour loves to be trusted.

12. Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem: praise thy God, O Zion. 13. For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates: he hath blessed thy children within thee. 14. He maketh peace in thy borders: and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat. 15. He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly. 16. He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoar frost like ashes. 17. He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold? 18. He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow. 19. He sheweth his word unto Jacob: his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. 20. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments they have not known them. Praise ye the LORD.

Jerusalem and Zion, the holy city, the holy hill, are here called upon to praise God, *ver. 12.* For where should praise be offered up to God, but there where his altar is? Where may we expect that glory should be given to him, but in the beauty of holiness? Let the inhabitants of Jerusalem praise the Lord in their own houses; let the priests and Levites that attend in Zion, the city of their solemnities, in a special manner praise the Lord. They have more cause to do it than others, and they lie under greater obligations to do it than others; for it is their business, it is their profession. *Praise thy God, O Zion*, he is thine, and therefore thou art bound to praise him; his being thine includes all happiness, so that thou canst never want matter for praise.

Jerusalem and Zion must praise God,

1. For the prosperity and flourishing estate of their civil interests, *ver. 13, 14.* (1.) For the common safety; they had gates, and kept their gates barred in times of danger; but that would not have been an effectual security to them, if God had not *strengthened the bars of their gates*, and fortified their fortifications. The most probable means we can devise for our own preservation, will not answer the end, unless God give his blessing with them; we must therefore in the careful and diligent use of those means, depend upon him for that blessing, and attribute the undisturbed repose of our land, more to the wall of fire, than to the wall of water, round about us, Zech. ii. 5. (2.) For the increase of their people; this strengthens the bars of the gates as much as any thing; *He hath blessed thy children within thee*, with that first and great blessing, *Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the land*. It is a comfort to parents to see their children blessed of the Lord, Isa. lxi. 9. and a comfort to the generation that is going off, to see the rising generation numerous and hopeful; for which blessing God must be blessed. (3.) For the publick tranquillity, that they were delivered from the terrors and desolations of war; *He maketh peace in thy borders*, by putting an end to the wars that were, and preventing the wars that were threatened and feared. He makes peace within thy borders, *i. e.* in all parts of the country, by composing differences among neighbours, that there may be no intestine broils and animosities; and *upon thy borders*; that they may not be attacked by invasions from abroad. If there be trouble any where, it is in the borders, the marches of a country, the frontier towns lie most exposed, so that if there be peace in the borders, there is a universal peace, a mercy we can never be

enough thankful for. (4.) For great plenty, the common effect of peace: He *filleteth thee with the finest of the wheat*; wheat, the most valuable grain, the fat, the finest of that, and a fulness thereof; What would they more? Canaan abounded with the best wheat, *Deut. xxxii. 14.* and exported it to the countries abroad, as appears, *Ezek. xxvii. 17.* The land of Israel was not enriched with precious stones, or spices, but with *the finest of the wheat*, with bread that strengthens man's heart, and that made it the glory of all lands; and for that God was praised in Zion.

2. For the wonderful instances of his power in the weather, particularly the winter-weather; he that protects Zion and Jerusalem, is that God of power, from whom all the powers of nature are derived, and on whom they depend, and who produceth all the changes of the seasons, which, if they were not common, would astonish us.

(1.) In general, whatever alterations there are in this lower world (and it is that world that is subject to continual changes) they are produced by the will, and power, and providence of God, *ver. 15. He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth*, as one that has an uncontested authority to give orders, and innumerable attendants ready to carry his orders, and put them in execution: As the world was at first made, so it is still upheld and governed by a word of almighty power, *God speaks, and it is done*, for all are his servants. That word takes effect, not only surely but speedily, *his word runneth very swiftly*; for nothing can oppose or retard it. As the lightning which passeth through the air in an instant, such is the word of God's providence, and such the word of his grace, when it is sent forth with commission, *Luke xvii. 24.* Angels that carry his word, and fulfil it, *fly swiftly*, *Dan. ix. 21.*

(2.) In particular, frosts and thaws are both of them wonderful changes, and in both we must acknowledge the word of his power.

1. Frosts are from God; with him are the *treasures of the snow and the hail*, *Job xxxviii. 22, 23.* and out of these treasures he draws as he pleaseth. 1. *He giveth snow like wool*; it is compared to wool for its whiteness, *Isa. i. 18.* and its softness; it falls silently, and makes no more noise than the fall of a lock of wool; it covers the earth, and keeps it warm like a fleece of wool, and so promotes its fruitfulness; see how God can work by contraries, and bring meat out of the eater, can warm the earth with cold snow. (2.) *He scattereth the hoar-frost*; which is dew congealed, as the snow and hail are rain congealed; this looks like ashes scattered upon the grass, and is sometimes prejudicial to the products of the earth, and blasts them as if it were hot ashes, *Psal. lxxviii. 47.* (3.) *He casteth forth his ice like morsels*, which may be understood either of large hail-stones, which are as ice in the air, or of the ice which covers the face of the waters, and when it is broken, though naturally it was as drops of drink, is now as morsels of meat, or crusts of bread: And, (4.) When we see the frost, and snow, and ice, we feel it in the air, *Who can stand before his cold?* The beasts cannot, they retire into dens, *Job xxxvii. 8.* they are easily conquered then, *2 Sam. xxiii. 20.* Men cannot, but are forced to take shelter of fires, or furs, or both, and all little enough where and when the cold is in extremity. We see not the causes when we feel the effects; and therefore we must call it his cold, it is of his sending, and therefore we must bear it patiently, and be thankful for warm houses, and clothes, and beds, to relieve us against the rigour of the season; and must give him the glory of his wisdom and sovereignty, his power and faithfulness, which appears in the winter-weather, which shall not cease no more than summer, *Gen. viii. 22.* And let us also infer from it, if we cannot stand before the cold of his frosts, how can we stand before the heat of his wrath?

2. Thaws are from God; when he pleaseth, *ver. 18. He sendeth out his word and melteth them*; the frost, the snow, the ice, they are all dissolved presently, in order to which he *causeth the wind, the south-wind to blow, and the waters which were frozen, flow again as they did before.* We are soon sensible of the change, but we see not the causes of it, but must resolve it into the will of the first cause: And in it we must take notice not only of the power of God, that he can so suddenly, so insensibly make such a great and universal alteration in the temper of the air, and the face of the earth; what cannot he do, that doth this every winter, perhaps often every winter? But also of the goodness of God; hard weather doth not always continue, it would be sad if it should; he doth not contend for ever, but *reneweth the face of the earth*: As he remembered Noah, and released him, *Gen. viii. 1.* so he remembers the earth, and his covenant with the earth, *Cant. ii. 11, 12.* This thawing word, may represent the gospel of Christ, and this thawing wind, the Spirit of Christ; (for the spirit is compared to the wind, *John iii. 8.*) both are sent for the melting of frozen souls; converting grace, like the thaw, softens the heart that was hard, moistens it, and melts it into tears of repentance; it warms good affections, and makes them to flow, which before were chilled, and stopped up. The change which the thaw makes is universal, and yet gradual, it is very evident, and yet how it is done is unaccountable, such is the change wrought in the conversion of a soul, when God's word and Spirit are sent to melt it, and restore it to itself.

3. For his distinguishing favour to Israel, in giving them his word and ordinances, a much more valuable blessing than their peace and plenty, *ver. 14.* as much as the soul is more excellent than the body. Jacob and Israel had God's statutes and judgments among them, they were under his peculiar government, the municipal laws of their nation were of his framing and enacting; their constitution a theocracy; they had the benefit of divine revelation, the great things of God's law were written to them, they had a priesthood of divine institution for all things pertaining to God, and prophets for all extraordinary occasions: but they went upon sure grounds in their religion. Now this was, 1. A preventing mercy, they did not find out God's statutes and judgments of themselves, but *God shewed his word unto Jacob*, and by that word he made known to them his *statutes and judgments*. It is a great mercy to any people to have the word of God among them, *faith comes by hearing and reading that word*, that faith without which it is impossible to please God. 2. A distinguishing mercy, and upon that account the more obliging; *He hath not dealt so with every nation*, not with any nation, and *as for his judgments they have not known them*, nor are like to know them till the Messiah comes, and takes down the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile, that the gospel may be preached to every creature. Other nations had plenty of outward good things; some nations were very rich, others had pompous powerful princes, and polite literature, but none were blessed with God's statutes and judgments as Israel was; let Israel therefore praise the Lord in the observation of these statutes; *Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not to the world! Even so, Father, because it seemed good in thine eyes.*

P S A L M CXLVIII.

This psalm is a most solemn and earnest call to all the creatures, according to their capacity, to praise their Creator, and to shew forth his eternal power and Godhead, the invisible things of which are manifested in the things that are seen: And thereby the psalmist designs to express his great affection to the duty of praise; he is highly satisfied that God is praised, is very desirous that he may be more praised, and therefore doth all he can to engage all about him in this pleasant work, yea, and all that shall come after him, whose hearts must be very dead and cold, if they be not raised and enlarged in praising God, by the lofty flights of divine poetry, which we find in this psalm. 1. *He calls upon the higher house, the creatures that are placed in the upper world, to praise the Lord, both those that are intellectual beings, and are capable of doing it actively, ver. 1, 2. And those that are not, and are therefore capable of doing it only objectively, ver. 3,—6.* 2. *He calls upon the lower house, the creatures of this lower world, both those that can only minister matter of praise, ver. 7,—10, and those that being endued with reason are capable of offering up this sacrifice, ver. 11,—13. especially his own people, who have more cause to do it, and are more concerned to do it, than any other, ver. 14.*

Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights. 2. Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts. 3. Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. 4. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. 5. Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created. 6. He hath also established them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass.

We in this dark and depressed world, know but little of the world of light and exaltation, and conversing within narrow confines, can scarce admit any tolerable conceptions of the vast regions above. But this we know,

1. That there is above us a world of blessed angels, by whom God is praised, an innumerable company of them; *Thousand thousands minister unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him*; and it is his glory that he hath such attendants, but much more his glory that he neither needeth them, nor is, nor can be any way benefited by them: To that bright and happy world the psalmist hath an eye here, *ver. 1, 2.* In general, to the heavens, to the heights; the heavens are the heights, and therefore we must lift up our souls above the world, unto God in the heavens, and on things above we must set our affections. It is his desire that God may be praised from the heavens, that from thence a praising frame may be transmitted to this world in which we live, that from the inhabitants of that world we may learn this blessed work. It is his delight to think that God is praised in the heights; that while we are so cold, and low, and flat in praising God, there are those above that are doing it in a better manner, and that while we are so often interrupted in this work, they rest not day nor night from it. In particular, he had an eye to God's angels, to his hosts, and calls upon them to praise God. That God's angels are his hosts is plain enough; as soon as they were made, they were lifted, armed and disciplined; he employs them in fighting his battles,

ties, and they keep ranks, and know their place, and observe the word of command as his hosts. But what is the meaning of the psalmist's calling upon them, and exciting them to praise God, is not so easy to account for; I will not say, they do not heed it, because we find that *to the principalities and powers is known by the church the manifold wisdom of God*, Eph. iii. 10. but I will say, they do not need it, for they are continually praising God, and there is no deficiency at all in their performances; and therefore, when in singing this psalm we call upon the angels to praise God, as we did, *Psal. ciii. 20.* we mean, that we desire God may be praised by the ablest hands, and in the best manner; that we are sure it is fit he should be so; that we are pleased to think he is so; and that we have a spiritual communion with those that dwell in his house above, and are still praising him; and that we are come by faith, and hope, and holy love, to the *innumerable company of angels*, Heb. xii. 22.

2. That there is above us not only an assembly of blessed spirits, but a system of vast bodies too, and those bright ones, in which God is praised, *i. e.* which may give us occasion (as far as we know any thing of them) to give to God the glory not only of their being, but of their beneficence to mankind. Observe,

(1.) What these creatures are that thus shew us the way in praising God, and, whenever we look up and consider the heavens, furnish us with matter for his praises. 1. There is the *sun, moon and stars*, which continually, either day or night, present themselves to our view, as looking-glasses, in which we may see a faint shadow (for so I must call it, not a resemblance) of the glory of him that is the *Father of lights*, ver. 3. The greater lights, the sun and moon, are not too great, too bright, to praise him: and the praises of the lesser lights, the stars, shall not be slighted. Idolaters made the sun, moon and stars, their gods, and praised them, worshipping and serving the creature, because it is seen, more than the Creator, because he is not seen; but we who worship the true God, only make them our fellow-worshippers, and call upon them to praise him with us; nay, as Levites to attend us, who as priests offer this spiritual sacrifice. 2. There is the *heavens of heavens* above the sun and stars, the seat of the blessed; from the vastness and brightness of these unknown orbs abundance of glory redounds to God, for *the heavens of heavens are the Lord's*, Psal. cxv. 16. and yet *they cannot contain him*, 1 Kings viii. 27. The learned Dr. Hammond understands here by *the heavens of heavens*, the upper regions of the air, or all the regions of it, as, *Psal. lxviii. 33.* We read of the heaven of heavens, whence *God sends forth his voice, and that a mighty voice*, meaning the thunder. 3. There is the *waters that be above the heavens*, *i. e.* the clouds that hang above, in the air, where they are reserved *against the day of battle and war*, Job xxxviii. 23. We have reason to praise God, not only that these waters do not drown the earth, but that they do water it, and make it fruitful. The Chaldee paraphrase reads it, *Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that depend on the word of him which is above the heavens*; for the key of the clouds is one of the keys which God hath in his hand, wherewith he opens and none can shut, he shuts and none can open.

(2.) Upon what account we are to give God the glory of them: *Let them praise the name of the Lord*, *i. e.* let us praise the name of the Lord for them, and observe what constant and fresh matter for praise may be fetched from them. 1. Because he made them, gave them their powers, and assigned them their places: *He commanded them* (as big as they are) out of nothing, *and they were created* at a word's speaking. God created, and therefore may command; for he commanded, and so created; his authority must always be acknowledged, and acquiesced in, because he once spake with such authority. 2. Because he still upholds and preserves them in their beings and posts, their powers and motions, *ver. 6.* *He hath established them for ever and ever*, *i. e.* to the end of time, a short ever, but it is their ever; they shall last as long as there is occasion for them. *He hath made a decree*, the law of creation, *which shall not pass*; it was enacted by the wisdom of God, and therefore need not be altered; by his sovereignty and inviolable fidelity, and therefore cannot be altered: All the creatures that praised God at first for their creation, must praise him still for their continuance: And we have reason to praise him, that they are kept within the bounds of a decree; for to that it is owing that the waters above the heavens have not a second time drowned the earth.

7. Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons and all deeps. 8. Fire and hail, snow and vapour, stormy wind fulfilling his word. 9. Mountains and all hills, fruitful trees and all cedars. 10. Beasts and all cattle, creeping things, and flying fowl. 11. Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth. 12. Both young men and maidens, old men and children. 13. Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent, his glory is above the earth and heaven. 14. He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; *even*

of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the LORD.

Considering that this earth, and the atmosphere that surrounds it, are the very sediment of the universe, it concerns us to enquire after these considerations that may be of use to reconcile us to our place in it; and I know none more likely than this (next to the visit which the Son of God once made to it) that even in this world, as dark and as bad as it is, God is praised: *Praise ye the Lord from the earth*, ver. 7. As the rays of the sun, which are darted directly from heaven, reflect back (though more weakly) from the earth; so should the praises of God, with which this cold and infected world should be warmed and perfumed.

1. Even those creatures that are not dignified with the powers of reason, yet are summoned into this consort, because God may be glorified in them, *ver. 7, 8, 9, 10.* Let the *dragons* or whales, that sport themselves in the mighty waters, *Psal. civ. 26.* dance before the Lord to his glory, who largely proves his own omnipotence by his dominion over the leviathan or whale, *Job iv. 1.* *All deeps*, and their inhabitants, praise God; the sea, and the animals there; the bowels of the earth, and the animals there: *Out of the depths* God may be praised as well as prayed unto. If we look up into the atmosphere, we meet with a great variety of meteors, which being in kind of new productions (and some of them unaccountable) do in a special manner magnify the power of the great Creator. There are fiery meteors, lightning is *fire*, and there are other blazes sometimes kindled which may be so called; there are watry meteors, *hail and snow*, and the *vapours* of which they are gendred; there are airy meteors, *stormy winds*; we know not whence they come, nor whither they go; whence their mighty force comes, nor how it is spent; but this we know, that be they never so strong, so stormy, they *fulfil God's word*, and do that, and no more than he appoints them; and by this Christ shewed himself to have a divine power, that he *commanded even the winds and the seas, and they obeyed him*. Those that will not fulfil God's word, but rise up in rebellion against it, shew themselves to be more violent and headstrong, than even the stormy winds, for they fulfil it. Take a view of the surface of the earth, *ver. 9.* and there are presented to our view the exalted grounds, *mountains and all hills*; from the barren tops of some of which, and the fruitful tops of others, we may fetch matter for praise. The exalted plants, some that are exalted by their usefulness, as the *fruitful trees* of various kinds, for the fruits of which God is to be praised; others by their stateliness, as *all cedars*, those *trees of the Lord*, *Psal. civ. 16.* Cedars, the high trees, are not the fruitful trees, yet they had their use even in God's temple. Pass we next to the animal kingdom, and there we find God glorified, even by the *beasts* that run wild, *and all cattle* that are tame, and in the service of man, *ver. 10.* Nay, even the *creeping things* are not sunk so low, nor do the *flying fowl* soar so high, as not to be called upon to *praise the Lord*. Much of the wisdom, power and goodness, of the Creator, appears in the several capacities and instincts of the creatures, in the provision made for them, and the use made of them. When we see all so very strange, and all so very good, surely we cannot but acknowledge God with wonder and thankfulness.

2. Much more those creatures that are dignified with the powers of reason, ought to employ them in praising God. *Kings of the earth, and all people*, ver. 11, 12. (1.) God is to be glorified in and for these, as in and for the inferior creatures, for their hearts are in the hand of the Lord, and he makes what use he pleaseth of them. God is to be praised in the order and constitution of kingdoms, the *pars imperans*, and the *pars subdita*, *kings of the earth and all people*: It is by him that kings reign, and people are subject to them; the *princes and judges of the earth* have their wisdom and their commission from him, and we, to whom they are blessings, ought to bless God for them. God is to be praised also in the constitution of families, for he is the founder of them; and for all the comfort of relations, the comfort that parents and children, brothers and sisters, have in each other, God is to be praised. (2.) God is to be glorified by these. Let all manner of persons praise God. 1. Those of each rank, high and low; the praises of kings, and princes, and judges are demanded; those on whom God has put honour, must honour him with it; and the power they are intrusted with, and the figure they make in the world, puts them in a capacity of bringing more glory to God, and doing him more service than others: Yet the praises of the people are expected also, and God will graciously accept of them; Christ despised not the hosannahs of the multitude. 2. Those of each sex, *young men and maidens*, who use to be merry together, let them turn it into this channel, let the mirth be sacred, that it may be pure. 3. Those of each age; *old men* must still bring forth this fruit in old age, and not think that either the gravity, or the infirmity of their age, will excuse them from it; *and children* too must begin betimes to praise God; *even out of the mouth of babes and sucklings* this good work is perfected. A good reason is given, *ver. 13.* why all these should *praise the name of the Lord*, because *his name alone is excellent*, and worthy to be praised; it is a name above every name, no name, no nature, but his, has in it all excellency.

His

His glory is above both the earth and the heaven; and let all the inhabitants both of earth and heaven praise him, and yet acknowledge his name to be exalted, far above all blessing and praise.

3. Most of all, his own people, that are dignified with peculiar privileges, must in a peculiar manner give glory to him, *ver. 14.* Observe, 1. The dignity God has put upon *his people, even the children of Israel*, typical of the honour reserved for all true believers, who are God's spiritual Israel. *He exalteth their horn, their brightness, their plenty, their power.* The people of Israel were in many respects honoured above any other nation, for *to them pertained the adoption, the glory, and the covenants*, *Röm. ix. 4.* It was their own honour that they were *a people near unto God*, his *Segullah*, his *peculiar treasure*; they were admitted into his courts, when a stranger that came nigh must be put to death. They had him *nigh to them in all that which they called upon him for*. This blessing is now come upon the Gentiles, through Christ, for they that *were afar off, by his blood, are made nigh*, *Ephes. ii. 13.* It is the greatest honour that can be put upon a man to be brought near to God, the nearer the better; and it will be best of all, when nearest of all in the kingdom of glory. 2. The duty God expects from them in consideration of this; Let those whom God honours, honour him; *Praise ye the Lord*: Let him be the *praise of all his saints*, the object of their praise; for he is a praise to them. *He is thy praise, and he is thy God*, *Deut. viii. 21.* Some by the *horn of his people* understand David, as a type of Christ, whom God has exalted to be *a prince and a saviour*, who is indeed the praise of all his saints, and will be so for ever; for it is through him that they are *a people near to God*.

P S A L M CXLIX.

The foregoing psalm was a hymn of praise to the Creator; this to the Redeemer: It is a psalm of triumph in the God of Israel, and over the enemies of Israel. Probably, it was penned upon occasion of some victory which Israel was blessed and honoured with. Some conjecture that it was penned when David had taken the stronghold of Zion, and settled his government there: But it looks further to the kingdom of the Messiah, who, in the chariot of the everlasting gospel, goes forth conquering, and to conquer. To him, and his graces and glories, we must have an eye in singing this psalm, which speaks, 1. Abundance of joy to all the people of God, ver. 1,—5. 2. Abundance of terror to the proudest of their enemies, ver. 6,—9.

1. **P**RAISE ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints. 2. Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. 3. Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp. 4. For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation. 5. Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.

We have here,

(1.) The calls given God's Israel to praise. *All his works* were in the foregoing psalm excited to *praise him*; but here his saints in a particular manner are required to bless him. Observe then,

1. Who are called upon to praise God. *Israel* in general, the body of the church, *ver. 2.* the *children of Zion* particularly, the inhabitants of that holy hill, who are nearer to God than other Israelites; those that have the word and ordinances of God near them, that are not put to travel far to them, surely more is expected to be done by them than by others in praising God. All true christians may call themselves the *children of Zion*, for in faith and hope *we are come unto mount Zion*, *Heb. xii. 22.* The saints must praise God, saints in profession, saints in power, for this is the intention of their sanctification, they are therefore devoted to the glory of God, and renewed by the grace of God, that *they may be unto him for a name and a praise*.

2. What must be the principle of this praise; and that is holy joy in God: *Let Israel rejoice, and the children of Zion be joyful, and the saints be joyful in glory.* Our praises of God, should flow from a heart filled with delight and triumph in God's attributes, and our relation to him. Much of the power of godliness in the heart, consists in making God our chief joy, and solacing ourselves in him; and our faith in Christ is described by our rejoicing in him. And we then give honour to God when we take pleasure in him. We must *be joyful in glory*, i. e. in him as our glory, and in the interest we have in him: and let us look upon it as our glory to be of those that rejoice in God.

3. What must be the expressions of the praise. We must, by all proper ways, shew forth the praises of God. *Sing to the Lord*; we must entertain our selves and proclaim his name by *singing praises unto him*, *ver. 3.* *singing aloud*, *ver. 5.* for we should sing psalms with all our heart, as those that are not only not ashamed of it, but are enlarged in it. We must sing a *new song*, newly composed upon every special occasion; sing with new affections, which make

the song new, though the words have been used before, and keeping them from growing threadbare. Let God be *praised in the dance with timbrel and harp*, according to the usage of the Old-Testament church, very early, *Exod. xv. 20.* where we find God praised with *timbrels and dances*. They who from hence urge the use of musick in religious worship, must, by the same rule, introduce dancing, for they went together, as in David's dancing before the ark, and *Judg. xxi. 21.* But whereas many scriptures in the New Testament keep up singing as a gospel-ordinance, none provide for the keeping up of musick and dancing; the gospel-canon for psalmody is to *sing with the spirit and with the understanding*.

4. What opportunities must be taken for praising God; none must be let slip, but particularly, (1.) We must praise God in publick, in the *solemn assembly*, *ver. 1.* in the *congregation of saints*; the more the better, it is the liker to heaven. Thus God's name must be owned before the world; thus the service must have a solemnity put upon it, and we must mutually excite one another to it. The principal end and design of our coming together in religious assemblies, is, that we may join together in praising God. Other parts of the service must be in order to this. (2.) We must praise him in private. *Let the saints* be so transported with their joy in God as to *sing aloud upon their beds*, when they awake in the night full of the praises of God, as David, *Psal. cxix. 62.* When God's Israel is brought to a quiet settlement, let them enjoy that with thankfulness to God; much more may true believers, that are entered into God's rest, and find repose in Jesus Christ, sing aloud for joy of that. Upon their sick beds, their death beds, let them sing the praises of their God.

(2.) The cause given God's Israel for praise. Consider,

1. God's doings for them. They have reason to rejoice in God, to devote themselves to his honour, and employ themselves in his service; for it is he that made them. He gave us our being as men, and we have reason to praise him for that, for it is a noble and excellent being. He gave Israel its being as a people, as a church; made him what he is, so much different from other nations; let that people therefore praise him, for he formed them for himself, on purpose that they might *shew forth his praise*, *Isa. xliii. 21.* Let Israel rejoice in his Maker; so it is in the original; for God said, *Let us make man*; and this, some think, is the mystery of the Trinity.

2. God's dominion over them. This follows upon the former: if he made them he is their King; he that gave being, no doubt may give law; and this ought to be the matter of our joy and praise, that we are under the conduct and protection of such a wise and powerful King. *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, for behold thy King comes*, the King Messiah, whom God has *set upon his holy hill of Zion*; let all the children of Zion *be joyful in him*, and go forth to meet him with their hosanna's, *Zech. ix. 9.*

3. God's delight in them. He is a King that rules by love, and therefore to be praised, for *the Lord taketh pleasure in his people*, in their services, in their prosperity, in communion with them, and in the communications of his favour to them. He that is infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself, and to whose fidelity no accession can be made, yet graciously condescends to *take pleasure in his people*, *Psal. cxlvii. 11.*

4. God's designs concerning them. Besides the present complacency he hath in them, he hath prepared for their future glory, *He will beautify the meek, the humble, and lowly, and contrite in heart, that tremble at his word and submit to it, that are patient under their afflictions, and shew all meekness towards all men.* These men vilify and asperse, but God will justify them, and wipe off their reproach, nay, he will beautify them, they shall appear not only clear, but comely before all the world, with the comeliness that he puts upon them. He will beautify them with salvation; with temporal salvations, when God works remarkable deliverances for his people, they that had *been among the pots become as the wings of a dove covered with silver*, *Psal. lxxviii. 13.* but especially with eternal salvation. The righteous shall be beautified in that day, when they *shine forth as the sun*. In the hopes of this, let them now in the darkest day *sing a new song*.

6. *Let the high praises of God be in their mouth*, and a two-edged sword in their hand; 7. To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; 8. To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; 9. To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD.

The Israel of God is here represented triumphing over their enemies, which is both the matter of their praise, let them give to God the glory of those triumphs; and the recompence of their praise; they that are truly thankful to God for their tranquillity, shall be blessed with victory: Or, it may be taken as a further expression of their praise, *ver. 6.* *Let the high praises of God be in their mouth*, and then in a holy zeal for his honour, let them take a *two-edged sword in their hand*, to fight his battles against the enemies of his kingdom.

Now this may be applied,

1. To the many victories which God blessed his people Israel with over the nations of Canaan, and other nations that were devoted to destruction. These began in Moses and Joshua, who when they taught Israel the high praises of the Lord, did withal put a two-edged sword in their hand; David did so too, for as he was the sweet finger of Israel, so he was the captain of their hosts, and taught the children of Judah the use of the bow, 2 Sam. i. 18. taught their hands to war, as God had taught his. Thus he and they went on victoriously, fighting the Lord's battles, and avenging Israel's quarrels on those that had oppressed them; then they executed vengeance upon the heathen, the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, and others, 2 Sam. viii. 1, &c. and punishments upon the people, for all the wrong they had done to God's people, ver. 7. Their kings and nobles were taken prisoners, ver. 8. and on some of them the judgment written was executed, as by Joshua on the kings of Canaan, by Gideon on the princes of Midian, by Samuel on Agag. The honour of this redounded to all the Israel of God, and to him who put it upon them they return it intirely in their hallelujahs. Jehoshaphat's army had at the same time the high praises of God in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, for they went forth to war singing the praises of God, and then their sword did execution, 2 Chron. xx. 23. Some apply it to the time of the Maccabees, when the Jews sometimes gained great advantages against their oppressors. And if it seem strange that the meek should, notwithstanding that character, be thus severe, and upon kings and nobles too, here is one word that justifies them in it, it is the judgment written.

They do not do it from any personal malice and revenge, or any bloody politicks that they govern themselves by, but by commission from God, according to his direction, and in obedience to his command; and Saul lost his kingdom for disobeying a command of this nature. Thus the kings of the earth that shall be employed in the destruction of the New Testament Babylon, will but execute the judgment written, Rev. xvii. 16, 17. But since now no such special commissions can be produced, this will by no means justify the violences either of subjects against their princes, or princes upon their subjects, or both upon their neighbours, under pretence of religion; for Christ never intended that his gospel should be propagated by fire and sword, or his righteousness wrought by the wrath of man. When the high praises of God are in our mouth, with them we should have an olive-branch of peace in our hands.

2. To Christ's victories by the power of his gospel and grace over spiritual enemies, in which all believers are more than conquerors. The word of God is the two-edged sword, Heb. iv. 12. the sword of the Spirit, Eph. vi. 17. which is not enough to have in our armoury, we must have it in our hand, as our Master had, when he said, *It is written*. Now, 1. With this two-edged sword the first preachers of the gospel obtained a glorious victory over the powers of darkness: Vengeance was executed upon the gods of the heathen, by the conviction and conversion of those that had been long their worshippers; and by the consternation and confusion of those that would not repent, Rev. vi. 15. The strong-holds of Satan were cast down, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. Great men were made to tremble at the word, as Felix. Satan, the god of this world, was cast out, according to the judgment given against him: This is the honour of all christians, that their holy religion has been so victorious. 2. With this two-edged sword believers fight against their own corruptions, and through the grace of God subdue and mortify them; the sin that had dominion over them is crucified; self, that once sat king, is bound with chains, and brought into subjection to the yoke of Christ; the tempter is foiled and bruised under their feet: *This honour have all the saints*. 3. The compleat accomplishment of this will be in the judgment of the great day, when the Lord shall come with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, Jude 15. Vengeance shall then be executed upon the heathen, Psal. ix. 17. and punishments, everlasting punishments, upon the people; kings and nobles, that cast away the bands and cords of Christ's government, Psal. ii. 3. shall not be able to cast away the chains and fetters of his wrath and justice. Then shall be executed the judgment written, for the secrets of men shall be judged according to the gospel. This honour shall all the saints have, that, as assessors with Christ, they shall judge the world, 1 Cor. vi. 2. and in the prospect of that, let them praise the Lord, and continue Christ's faithful servants and soldiers to their lives end.

P S A L M CL.

The first and last of the psalms have both the same number of verses, are both short, and very memorable; but the scope of them is very different; the first psalm is an elaborate instruction in our duty, to prepare us for the comforts of our devotion; this is all rapture and transport, and, perhaps, was penned on purpose to be the conclusion of those sacred songs, to shew what is the design of them all, and that is, to assist us in praising God. The psalmist had been himself full of the praises of God, and here he would fain fill all the world with them: Again and again he calls, Praise the Lord, praise him, praise him, no less than thirteen times in these six short verses. He shews, 1. For what, and upon what account God is to be praised, ver. 1, 2. 2. How, and with what expressions of

joy God is to be praised, ver. 3,—5. 3. Who must praise the Lord; it is every one's business, ver. 6. In singing this psalm we should endeavour to get our hearts much affected with the perfections of God, and the praises with which he is and shall be for ever attended, throughout all ages, world without end.

1. Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. 2. Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness. 3. Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. 4. Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. 5. Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high-sounding cymbals. 6. Let every thing that hath breath, praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.

We are here with the greatest earnestness imaginable excited to praise God; if, as some suppose, it was primarily intended for the Levites, to stir them up to do their office in the house of the Lord, as singers and players on instruments, yet we must take it as speaking to us, who are made to our God spiritual priests. And the repeating and inculcating of the call thus, intimates that it is a great and necessary duty, a duty which we should be much employed, and much enlarged in; but which we are naturally backward to, and cold in, and therefore need to be brought to it, and held to it, by precept upon precept, and line upon line. Observe here,

1. Whence this tribute of praise doth arise, and out of what part of his dominion it doth especially issue.

It comes, 1. From his sanctuary; praise him there: Let his priests, let his people that attend there, attend him with their praises. Where should he be praised, but there where he doth, in a special manner, both manifest his glory, and communicate his grace? Praise God upon the account of his sanctuary, and the privileges which we enjoy by having that among us, Ezek. xxxvii. 26. Praise God in his holy ones, so some read it: We must take notice of the image of God, as it appears on those that are sanctified, and love them for the sake of that image; and when we praise them, we must praise God in them. 2. From the firmament of his power: Praise him, because of his power and glory which appears in the firmament; its vastness, its brightness, and its splendid furniture; and because of the powerful influences it has upon this earth. Let them that have their dwelling in the firmament of his power, even the holy angels, lead in this good work. Some by the sanctuary, as well as by the firmament of his power, understand the highest heavens, the residence of his glory;—that is indeed his sanctuary, his holy temple, and there he is praised continually, in a far better manner than we can praise him. And it is a comfort to us, when we find we do it so poorly, that it is so well done there.

2. Upon what account this tribute of praise is due: Upon many accounts; particularly, 1. The works of his power, ver. 2. Praise him for his mighty acts, for his mightinesses, so the word is; for all the instances of his might, the power of his providence, the power of his grace; what he has done in the creation, government and redemption of the world; for the children of men in general, for his own church and children in particular. 2. The glory and majesty of his being: Praise him according to his excellent greatness, according to the multitude of his magnificence, (so Dr. Hammond reads it) not that our praises can bear any proportion to God's greatness, for it is infinite; but because he is greater than we can express or conceive, we must raise our conceptions and expressions to the highest degree we can attain to. Be not afraid of saying too much in the praises of God, as we often do in praising even great and good men, *Deus non patitur hyperbolen*, all the danger is of saying too little; and therefore when we have done our utmost, we must own, that though we have praised him in consideration of, yet not in proportion to his excellent greatness.

3. In what manner this tribute must be paid; praise him with all the kinds of musical instruments that were then used in the temple-service, ver. 3, 4, 5. It is well we are not concerned to enquire, what sort of instruments each of these were? It is enough that they were well known then: And our concern is, to know, 1. That hereby is intimated how full the Psalmist's heart was of the praises of God, and how desirous he was that this good work might go on. 2. That in serving God we should spare no cost or pains. 3. That the best musick in God's ears, is devout and pious affections; *Non musica chordula sed cor*. Praise God with a strong faith, praise him with holy love and delight; praise him with an entire confidence in Christ; praise him with a believing triumph over the powers of darkness; praise him with an earnest desire towards him, and a full satisfaction in him; praise him by a universal respect to all his commands; praise him by a cheerful submission to all his disposals; praise him by rejoicing in his love, and solacing yourselves in his great goodness; praise him by promoting the interests of the kingdom of his grace; praise him by a lively hope and expectation of the kingdom of his glory.

4. That various instruments being used in praising God, it should yet be done with an exact and perfect harmony; they must not hinder, but help one another. The New Testament-consort, instead of this, is, *with one mind, and one mouth to glorify God*, Rom. xv. 6.

4. Who must pay this tribute, *ver. 6. Let every thing that has breath, praise the Lord*; he began with a call to those that had a place in his sanctuary, and were employed in the temple-service, but he concludes with a call to all the children of men, in prospect of the time when the Gentiles should be taken into the church, and in every place, as acceptably as at Jerusalem, *this incense should be offered*, Mal. i. 11. Some think, in *every thing that has breath*, here we must include the inferior creatures, as *Gen. vii. 22. all in whose nostrils was the breath of life*. They praise God according to their capacity: The singing of birds, is a sort of praising God. The brutes do in effect say to man, we would praise God if we could, do you do it for us. John in vision heard a song of praise from *every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth*, Rev. v. 13. Others think, the children of men only are meant; for into them God has a more peculiar manner *breathed the breath of life*, and they are become *living souls*, Gen. ii. 7. Now the gospel is ordered to be preached to *every creature*, to every *human creature*, it is required that every human creature praise the Lord. What have we our breath, our spirit for, but to spend it in praising God, and how can we spend it better? (1.) Prayers are called *our breathings*, Lam. iii. 56. Let every one that breathes towards God in prayer, finding the benefit of that, breathe forth his praises too. Having breath, let the praises of God perfume our breath; let us be in this work as in our element; let it be to us as the air we *breathe in*, which we could not live without. Having our *breath in our nostrils*, let us consider that it is still *going forth*, and will shortly go, and not return:

Since therefore we must shortly breathe our last, while we have breath let us praise the Lord; and then we shall breathe our last with comfort, and when death runs us out of breath, we shall remove to a better state, to breathe, to breathe God's praises in a freer better air.

The three first of the five books of Psalms (according to the Hebrew division) concluded with Amen and Amen; the fourth with Amen, Hallelujah; but the last, and in it the whole book concludes only with Hallelujah, because the six last Psalms are wholly taken up in praising God, and there is not a word of complaint or petition in them. The nearer good Christians come to their end, the fuller they should be of the praises of God. Some think this last psalm is designed to represent to us the work of glorified saints in heaven, who are there continually praising God. And musical instruments here said to be used, are no more to be understood literally than the gold and pearls, and precious stones, which are said to adorn the new Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 18, 19. But as those intimate that the glories of heaven are the most excellent glories, so these intimate, that the praises the saints offer there, are the most excellent praises. Prayers will there be swallowed up in everlasting praises; there will be no intermission in praising God, and yet no weariness. Hallelujah's for ever repeated, and yet still new songs. Let us often take a pleasure in thinking what glorified saints are doing in heaven, what those are a doing that we have been acquainted with on earth, but are gone before us thither; and let it not only make us long to be among them, but quicken us to do this part of the will of God on earth, as they do it that are in heaven. And therefore let us spend as much of our time as may be in this good work, because in it we hope to spend a joyful eternity. Hallelujah is the word there, Rev. xix. 1, 3. Let us echo to it now, as those that hope to join in it shortly. Hallelujah, praise ye the Lord.

The End of the Book of PSALMS.



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PROVERBS,

With Practical Observations.

We have now before us, 1. A new Author, or Penman rather, or Pen (if you will) made use of by the holy Ghost, for the making known the mind of God to us, writing as moved by the finger of God, so the Spirit of God is called; and that is Solomon, through his hand came this book of Scripture, and the two that follow it, Ecclesiastes and Canticles, a Sermon and a Song. Some think he wrote Canticles when he was young, Proverbs in the midst of his days, and Ecclesiastes when he was old. In the title of his song he only writes himself Solomon, perhaps, because he wrote it before his accession to the throne, being filled with the holy Ghost when he was young. In the title of his Proverbs he writes himself the son of David, king of Israel, for then he ruled over all Israel. In the title of his Ecclesiastes he writes himself the son of David, king of Jerusalem, because then, perhaps, his influence was grown less upon the distant tribes, and he confined himself very much in Jerusalem. Concerning this author we may observe, (1.) That he was a king, and a king's son. The penmen of scripture hitherto, were most of them men of the first rank in the world, as Moses and Joshua, Samuel and David, and now Solomon: but after him the inspired writers were generally poor prophets, men of no figure in the world, because that dispensation was approaching in which God would choose the weak and foolish things of the world to confound the wise and mighty, and the poor should be employed to evangelize. Solomon was a very rich king, and his dominions very large, a king of the first magnitude, and yet addicted himself to the study of divine things, and was a prophet and a prophet's son. It is no disparagement to the greatest princes and potentates in the world to instruct those about them in religion, and the laws of it. (2.) That he was one whom God endued with extraordinary measures of wisdom and knowledge in answer to his prayers at his accession to the throne, his prayer was exemplary, Give me a wife and an understanding heart; the answer to it was encouraging, he had that, and all other things were added to him. Now here we find what good use he made of the wisdom God gave him, he not only governed himself and his kingdom with it, but he gave rules of wisdom to others also, and transmitted them to posterity. Thus must we trade with the talents with which we are trusted, according as they are. (3.) That he was one who had his faults, and in his latter end turned aside from those good ways of God which in this book he had directed others in; we have the story of it 1 Kings xi. and a sad story it is, that the penman of such a book as this should apostatize, as he did, tell it not in Gath; but let those who are most eminently useful, take warning by this, not to be proud or secure: and let us all learn not to think the worse of good instructions, though we have them from those who do not themselves altogether live up to them.

2. We have here a new way of writing, in which divine wisdom is taught us by Proverbs or short sentences, which contain their whole design within themselves, and are not connected with one another. We have had divine laws, histories and songs, and now divine proverbs: such various methods has divine Wisdom used for our instruction, that no stone being left unturned to do us good we may be inexcusable if we perish in our folly. Teaching by proverbs was, (1.) An ancient way of teaching, it was the most ancient way among the Greeks; the seven wise men of Greece had each of them some one saying that they valued themselves upon, and that made them famous: these sentences were inscribed on pillars, and had in great veneration as that which was said to come down from heaven, A Coelo descendit, γινώθι σεαυτόν, Know thy self. (2.) It was a plain and easy way of teaching, which cost neither the teachers nor the learners much pains, nor put their understandings or memories to the stretch. Long periods and arguments far fetched, must be laboured both by him that frames them and by him that takes them, while a proverb that carries both its sense and its evidence in a little compass is presently apprehended and subscribed to, and is easily retained. Both David's devotions and Solomon's instructions are sententious, which may recommend that way of expression to those who minister about holy things both in praying and preaching. (3.) It was a very profitable way of teaching, and served admirably well to answer the end. The word Mashal, here used for a proverb, comes from a word that signifies to rule, or have dominion, because of the commanding power and influence which wise and weighty sayings have upon the children of men, he that teacheth by them doth Dominari in concionibus. It is easy to observe how the world is governed by proverbs: As saith the proverb of the ancients, 1 Sam. xxiv. 13. or, as the vulgar expresses it, As the old saying is, goes very far with the most of men in forming their notions and fixing their resolves. Much of the wisdom of the ancients had been handed down to posterity by proverbs; and some think we may judge of the temper and character of a nation by the complexion of its vulgar proverbs. Proverbs in conversation are like axioms in philosophy, maxims in law, and postulata in the mathematicks, which no body disputes, but every body endeavours to expound, so as to have them on their side. Yet there are many corrupt proverbs which tend to debauch mens minds and harden them in sin. The devil has his proverbs, and the world and the flesh have their proverbs, which reflect reproach on God and religion, as Ezek. xii. 22. xviii. 2. to guard us against the corrupt influences of which God has his proverbs, which are all wise and good, and tend to make us so. These proverbs of Solomon were not meerly a collection of the wise sayings that had been formerly delivered, as some have imagined, but were the dictates of the Spirit of God in Solomon. The very first of them, chap. i. 7. agrees with what God said to man in the beginning, Job xxviii. 28. Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; so that though Solomon was
great,

great, and his name may serve as much as any man's to recommend his writings, yet behold a greater than Solomon is here. It is God, by Solomon, that here speaks to us: I say, to us; for these proverbs were written for our learning, and when Solomon speaketh to his son, the exhortation is said to speak to us as unto children, Heb. xii. 5. And as we have no book so useful to us in our devotions as David's psalms, so have we none so serviceable to us, for the right ordering of our conversations, as Solomon's proverbs, which, as David saith of the commandments, are exceeding broad, containing, in a little compass, a compleat body of divine ethicks, politicks, and oeconomicks; exposing every vice, recommending every virtue, and suggesting rules for the government of our selves in every relation and condition, and every turn of the conversation. The learned bishop Hall has drawn up a system of moral philosophy out of Solomon's proverbs and ecclesiastes. The nine first chapters of this book are reckoned as a preface, by way of exhortation to the study and practice of wisdom's rules, and caution against those things that would hinder therein. We have then the first volume of Solomon's proverbs, chap. x, --- xxiv. After that a second volume, chap. xxv, --- xxix. And then Agur's prophecy, chap. xxx. and Lemuel's, chap. xxxi. The scope of all is one and the same, to direct us so to order our conversation aright, as that in the end we may see the salvation of the Lord. The best comment on those rules is to be ruled by them.

C H A P. I.

Those that read David's psalms, especially those towards the latter end, would be tempted to think that religion is all rapture, and consists in nothing but the ecstasies and transports of devotion; and doubtless there is a time for them, and if there be a heaven upon earth it is in them: but while we are on earth, we cannot be wholly taken up with them, we have a life to live in the flesh, must have a conversation in the world, and into that we must now be taught to carry our religion, which is a rational thing, and very serviceable to the conduct of human life, and tends as much to make us discreet, as to make us devout, to make the face shine before men, in a prudent, honest, useful conversation, as to make the heart burn towards God in holy and pious affections. In this chapter we have 1. The title of the book, shewing the general scope and design of it, ver. 1, — 6. 2. The first principle of it recommended to our serious consideration, ver. 7, — 9. 3. A necessary caution against bad company, ver. 10, — 19. 4. A faithful and lively representation of wisdom's reasonings with the children of men, and the certain ruin of those that turn a deaf ear to those reasonings, ver. 20, — 33.

THE proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; 2. To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding; 3. To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; 4. To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. 5. A wise man will hear, and will increase learning: and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: 6. To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.

We have here an introduction to this Book, which, some think, was prefixed by the collector and publisher, as Ezra; but it is rather supposed to have been penned by Solomon himself, who, in the beginning of his book, proposeth his end in writing it, that he might keep to his business and closely pursue that end. We are here told,

1. Who wrote these wise sayings, ver. 1. They are the proverbs of Solomon. (1.) His name signifies peaceable, and the character both of his spirit and of his reign answered it, both were peaceable. David, whose life was full of troubles, wrote a book of devotion, for *is any afflicted? let him pray*. Solomon, who lived quietly, wrote a book of instruction, for when the churches were at rest they were edified: in times of peace we should learn ourselves and teach others, that which in troublous times both they and we must practise. (2.) He was the son of David: it was his honour to stand related to that good man, and he reckoned it so with good reason, for he fared the better for it, 1 Kings xi. 12. He had been blessed with a good education, and many a good prayer had been put up for him, Psal. lxxii. 1. the effect of both which appeared in his wisdom and usefulness. The generation of the upright are sometimes thus blessed that they are made blessings, eminent blessings in their day. Christ is often called the son of David, and Solomon was a type of him in this as in other things, that he opened his mouth in parables, or proverbs. (3.) He was king of Israel: a king, and yet no disparagement to him to be an instructor of the ignorant and teacher of babes. King of Israel, that people among whom God was known, and his name was great, among them he learned wisdom, and to them he communicated it. All the earth sought to Solomon to hear his wisdom, which excelled all mens, 1 Kings iv. 30. — x. 24. which was an honour to Israel, that their king was such a dictator, such an oracle. Solomon was famous for apophthegms, every word he said had weight in it, and something that was surprising and edifying; his servants that attended him and heard his wisdom, had, among them, collected three thousand proverbs of his, which they wrote in their day-books, but these were of his own writing, and do not amount to near a thousand: in these he was divinely inspired. Some think, out of those other proverbs of his, which were not so inspired, the apocryphal books of Ecclesiasticus, and the

Wisdom of Solomon were compiled, in which are many excellent sayings, and of great use, but, take all together, they are far short of this book. The Roman Emperors had each of them their symbol, or motto, as many now have with their coat of arms. But Solomon had many weighty sayings, not, as theirs, borrowed from others, but all the products of that extraordinary wisdom which God had endued him with.

2. For what end written, ver. 2, 3, 4. not to gain a reputation to the author, or strengthen his interest among his subjects, but for the use and benefit of all that in every age and place will govern themselves by these dictates, and study them close.

This book will help us,

(1.) To form right notions of things, and to possess our minds with clear and distinct ideas of them. That we may know wisdom and instruction; that wisdom which is got by instruction, by divine revelation; may know both how to speak and act wisely ourselves, and to give instruction to others.

(2.) To distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil; to perceive the words of understanding; to apprehend them, to judge of them, to guard against mistakes, and to accommodate what we are taught to ourselves, and our own use, that we may discern things that differ, and not be imposed upon, and may approve things that are excellent, and not lose the benefit of them, as the apostle prays, Phil. i. 10.

(3.) To order our conversation aright in every thing, ver. 3. This book will give, that we may receive the instruction of wisdom, that knowledge which will guide our practice in justice, judgment, and equity, ver. 3. which will dispose us to render to all their due, to God the things that are God's, in all the exercises of religion, and to all men what is due to them, according to the obligations which by relation, office, contract, or upon any other account, we lie under to them. Note, Those are truly wise, and none but those, that are universally conscientious; and the design of the scripture is, to teach us that wisdom. Justice in the duties of the first table, judgment in those of the second table, and equity, i. e. sincerity, in both, so some distinguish them.

3. For whose use they were written, ver. 4. They are of use to all, but are designed especially, 1. For the simple, to give subtilty to them. The instructions here given are plain and easy, and level to the meanest capacity; the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein; and those are likely to receive benefit by them, that are sensible of their own ignorance, and their need to be taught, and are therefore desirous to receive instruction; and those who receive those instructions in their light and power, though they be simple, will hereby be made subtil, graciously crafty to know the sin they should avoid, and the duty they should do, and to escape the tempter's wiles. He that is harmless as the dove, by observing Solomon's rules, may become wise as the serpent; and he that has been sinfully foolish, when he begins to govern himself by the word of God, becomes graciously wise. 2. For young people, to give them knowledge and discretion. Youth is the learning age, catches at instructions, receives impressions, and retains what is then received; it is therefore of great consequence that the mind be then seasoned well, nor can it receive a better tincture than from Solomon's proverbs. Youth is rash and heady, and inconsiderate; man is born like the wild ass's colt; and therefore needs to be broken by the restraints, and managed by the rules we find here. And if young people will but take heed to their ways, according to Solomon's proverbs, they will soon gain the knowledge and discretion of the ancients. Solomon had an eye to posterity in writing this book, hoping by it to season the minds of the rising generation with the generous principles of wisdom and virtue.

4. What good use would be made of them, ver. 5, 6. Those that are young and simple, may by them be made wise, and are not excluded from Solomon's school, as they were from Plato's. But is it only for such? No; here is not only milk for babes, but strong meat for strong men. This book will not only make the foolish and bad wise and good, but the wise and good wiser and better; and though the simple and the young man may perhaps slight those instructions, and not be the better for them, yet the wise man will hear; wisdom will be justified by her own children, though not by the children sitting in the market-place. Note, Even

Even wise men must hear, and not think themselves too wise to learn. A wise man is sensible of his own defects (*plurima ignoro, sed ignorantiam meam non ignoro*) and therefore is still pressing forward, that he may increase in learning, may know more, and know it better, more clearly and distinctly, and may know better how to make use of it: As long as we live we should strive to increase in all useful learning. It was a saying of one of the greatest of the rabbins, *Qui non auget scientiam, amittit de ea*, If our stock of knowledge be not increasing it is wasting, and they that would increase in learning must study the scriptures; those perfect the man of God.

A wise man by increasing in learning, is not only profitable to himself, but to others also.

1. As a counsellor. A man of understanding in these precepts of wisdom, by comparing them with one another, and with his own observations, shall, by degrees, attain unto wise counsels, i. e. he stands fair for preferment, and will be consulted as an oracle, and intrusted with the conduct of publick affairs: he shall come to sit at the helm, so the word signifies. Note, Industry is the way to honour; and those that God has blessed with wisdom must study to do good with it, according as their sphere is. It is more dignity indeed to be counsellor to the prince, but it is more charity to be counsellor to the poor, as Job was with his wisdom, *Job xxix. 15. I was eyes to the blind.*

2. As an interpreter, *ver. 6. To understand a proverb.* Solomon was himself famous for expounding riddles, and resolving hard questions, which was of old the celebrated entertainment of the eastern princes, witness the solutions he gave to the knots with which the queen of Sheba thought to puzzle him. Now here he undertakes to furnish his readers with that talent, as far as would be serviceable to the best purposes. They shall understand a proverb, even the interpretation, without which the proverb is a nut uncracked; when they hear a wise saying, though it be figurative, they shall take the sense of it, and know how to make use of it. The words of the wise are sometimes dark sayings: In St. Paul's epistles, there was that which was hard to be understood; but to those who being well versed in the scriptures know how to compare spiritual things with spiritual, they will be easy and safe. So that if you ask them, *Have ye understood all these things?* they may answer, *yea, Lord.* Note, It is a credit to religion when men of honesty are men of sense; all good people therefore should aim to be intelligent, and run to and fro, i. e. take pains in the use of means, that their knowledge may be increased.

7. ¶ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.
8. My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: 9. For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.

Solomon having undertaken to teach a young man knowledge and discretion, here lays down two general rules in order to be observed thereunto, and those are, to fear God, and honour his parents, which two fundamental laws of morality, Pythagoras begins his golden verses with, though the former of them wretchedly corrupted: *Primum, deos immortales cole — parentisque honora.*

To make young people such as they should be,

1. Let them have regard to God as their supreme, *ver. 7. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge*; it is the principal part of knowledge, so the margin; it is the head of knowledge; that is, 1. Of all things that are to be known, this is most evident, that God is to be feared, to be revered, served and worshipped; this is so the beginning of knowledge, that those know nothing who do not know this. 2. In order to the attaining of all useful knowledge, this is most necessary, that we fear God; we are not qualified to profit by the instructions that are given us, unless our minds be possessed with a holy reverence of God, and every thought within us be brought into obedience to him. *If any man do his will, he shall know of his doctrine*, John vii. 17. 3. All our knowledge, as it must take rise from the fear of God, so it must tend to it as its perfection and centre. Those know enough that know how to fear God, that are careful in every thing to please him, and fearful of offending him in any thing; this is the alpha and omega of knowledge.

To confirm this truth, that an eye to God must both direct and quicken all our pursuits of knowledge, he observes, that fools (i. e. atheists, who have no regard to God) despise wisdom and instruction; having no dread at all of God's wrath, nor any desire of his favour, they will not give you thanks for telling them what they may do to escape his wrath, and obtain his favour. They that say to the Almighty, Depart from us, who are so far from fearing him, that they set him at defiance, no wonder that they desire not the knowledge of his ways, but despise that instruction. Note, Those are fools that do not fear God, and value the scriptures; and though they may pretend to be admirers of wit, they are really strangers and enemies to wisdom.

2. Let them have regard to their parents, as their superiors, *ver. 8, 9. My son, hear the instruction of thy father.* He means, not
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only that he would have his own children to be observant of him, and of what he said to them, nor only that he would have his pupils, and those who came to him to be taught, to look upon him as their father, and attend to his precepts with the disposition of children; but he would have all children to be dutiful and respectful to their parents, and to conform to the virtuous and religious education which they give them, according to the law of the fifth commandment.

(1.) He takes it for granted, that parents will with all the wisdom they have instruct their children, and with all the authority they have give law to them for their good. They are reasonable creatures, and therefore we must not give them law without instruction; we must draw them with the cords of a man, and when we tell them what they must do, we must tell them why: But they are corrupt and wilful, and therefore with the instruction there is need of a law: Abraham will not only catechize, but command his household. Both the father and the mother must do all they can for the good education of their children, and all little enough.

(2.) He chargeth children both to receive and to retain the good lessons and laws their parents give them.

1. To receive them with readiness; hear the instruction of thy father; hear it, and heed it; hear it, and bid it welcome, and be thankful for it, and subscribe to it.

2. To retain them with resolution; forsake not their law; think not that when thou art grown up, and no longer under tutors and governors, thou mayst live at large; no, the law of thy mother was according to the law of thy God, and therefore it must never be forsaken: Thou wast trained up in the way in which thou shouldst go, and therefore when thou art old thou must not depart from it. Some observe, that whereas the Gentile ethicks, and the laws of the Persians and Romans, provided only that children should pay respect to their father, the divine law secures the honour of the mother also.

(3.) He recommends this as that which is very graceful, and will put an honour upon us. The instructions and laws of thy parents carefully observed and lived up to, shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, *ver. 9.* such an ornament as is in the sight of God of great price, and shall make thee look as great as those that wear the gold chains about their necks. Let divine truths and commands be to us as a coronet or a collar of SS, which are badges of first-rate honours, let us value them, and be ambitious of them, and then they shall be so to us. These are truly valuable, and shall be valued, who value themselves more by their virtue and piety, than by their worldly wealth and dignity.

10. ¶ My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. 11. If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: 12. Let us swallow them up alive as the grave, and whole, as those that go down to the pit: 13. We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: 14. Cast in thy lot among us, let us all have one purse. 15. My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path. 16. For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood. 17. Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird. 18. And they lay wait for their own blood, they lurk privily for their own lives. 19. So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain: which taketh away the life of the owners thereof.

Here Solomon gives another general rule to young people, in order to their finding out, and keeping in the paths of wisdom, and that is, to take heed of the snare of bad company. David's psalms begin with this caution, *Psalms i. 1.* and so do Solomon's proverbs; for nothing is more destructive, both to a lively devotion, and to a regular conversation, *ver. 10. My son, whom I love, and have a tender concern for, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not:* This is good advice for parents to give their children when they send them abroad into the world; it is the same that St. Peter gave to his new converts, *Acts ii. 40. Save yourselves from this untoward generation.* Observe, 1. How industrious wicked people are to seduce others into the paths of the destroyer; they will entice; sinners love company in sin; the angels that fell were tempters almost as soon as they were sinners. They do not threaten, or argue, but entice with flattery and fair speech; with a bait they draw the unwary young man to the hook. But they mistake, if they think that by bringing others to partake with them in their guilt, and to be bound as it were in the bond with them, they shall have the less to pay themselves; for they will have so much the more to answer for. 2. How cautious young people should be that they be not seduced by them: *Consent thou not*; and then though they entice thee, they cannot force thee. Do not say as they say, nor do as they do, or would have thee to do; have no fellowship with them.

To enforce this caution,

1. He represents the fallacious reasonings which sinners use in their enticements, and the arts of wheedling which they have, for
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the beguiling of unstable souls. He instanceth in highwaymen, that do what they can to draw others into their gang, *ver. 11.—14.* See here what they would have the young man to do; *Come with us, ver. 11.* let us have thy company, at first they pretend to ask no more; but the courtship riseth higher, *ver. 14. Cast in thy lot among us;* come in partner with us, join thy force to ours, and let us resolve to live and die together; thou shalt fare as we fare; and *let us all have one purse;* that what we get together, we may spend merrily together, for that is it they aim at.

Two unreasonable insatiable lusts they propose to themselves the gratification of, and therewith intice their prey into the snare.

(1.) Their cruelty. They thirst after blood, and hate those that are innocent, and never gave them any provocation, because by their honesty and industry they shame and condemn them, *Let us therefore lay wait for their blood, and lurk privily for them;* they are conscious to themselves of no crime, and consequently apprehensive of no danger, but travel unarmed, therefore we shall make the more easy prey of them. And, O, how sweet it will be to *swallow them up alive!* *ver. 12.* which these bloody men would do as greedily as the hungry lion devours the lamb: If it be objected, that the remains of the murdered will betray the murderers; they answer, no danger of that we will swallow them whole, as those that are buried. Who could imagine that the humane nature should degenerate so far, as that it should ever be a pleasure to one man to destroy another?

(2.) Their covetousness. They hope to get a good booty by it, *ver. 13.* we shall *find all precious substance* by following this trade, what though we venture our necks by it, we shall *fill our houses with spoil.* See here, 1. The idea they have of worldly wealth. They call it precious substance; whereas it is neither substance, nor precious; it is a shadow, it is vanity, especially that which is got by robbery, *Psal. lxxii. 10.* As that which is not, which will give a man no solid satisfaction. It is cheap, it is common, yet in their account it is precious, and therefore they will hazard their lives, and perhaps their souls in pursuit of it. It is the ruining mistake of thousands, that they over-value the wealth of this world, and look on it as *precious substance.* 2. The abundance of it which they promise themselves; we shall *fill our houses with it.* Those that trade with sin, promise themselves mighty bargains, and that it will turn to a vast account. All this will I give thee, (saith the tempter) but they only *dream that they eat;* the housefuls dwindle into scarce a handful, like the grafs on the house-tops.

2. He shews the perniciousness of these ways, as a reason why we should dread them, *ver. 15. My son, walk not thou in the way with them,* i. e. do not associate with them, get and keep as far off from them as thou canst, *refrain thy foot from their path,* do not take example by them, nor do as they do. Such is the corruption of our nature, that our foot is very prone to step into the path of sin, so that we must use necessary violence upon ourselves, to refrain our foot from it, and check ourselves, if at any time we take the least step towards it. Consider,

(1.) How pernicious their way is in its own nature, *ver. 16. Their feet run to evil,* to that which is displeasing to God, and hurtful to mankind, for they *make haste to shed blood.* Note, The way of sin is down-hill; men not only cannot stop themselves, but the longer they continue in it, the faster they run and make haste in it, as if they were afraid they should not do mischief enough, and resolved to lose no time. They said they would proceed leisurely, let us *lay wait for blood,* *ver. 11.* but thou wilt find they are all in the haste, so much hath Satan *filled their hearts.*

(2.) How pernicious the consequences of it will be. They are plainly told that this wicked way will certainly end in their own destruction, and yet they persist in it. Herein, 1. They are like the silly bird, that sees the net spread to take her, and yet it is in vain, she is decoyed into it by the bait, and will not take the warning which her own eyes gave her, *ver. 17.* But we think ourselves of *more value than many sparrows,* and therefore should have more wit, and act with more caution. God hath *made us wiser than the fowls of heaven,* (*Job xxxv. 11.*) and shall we then be as stupid as they! 2. They are worse than the birds, and have not the sense which we sometimes perceive them to have: For the fowler knows it is in vain to lay his snare in the sight of the bird, and therefore he has arts to conceal it. But the sinner sees ruin at the end of his way; the murderer, the thief, see the jail and the gallows before them, nay, they might see hell before them, their watchmen tell them they shall surely die, but it is to no purpose they rush into sin, and rush on in it, like the horse into the battle.

For really the stone they roll will turn upon themselves, *ver. 18, 19.* They lay wait and lurk privily for the blood and lives of others, but it will prove contrary to their intention to be for *their own blood, their own lives;* they will come at length to a shameful end; and if they escape the sword of the magistrate, yet there is a divine Nemesis that pursues them. *Vengeance suffers them not to live.* Their greediness of gain hurries them upon these practices, which will not suffer them to live out half their days, but will cut off the number of their months in the midst. These have little reason to be proud of their property, in that which *takes away the life of the owners,* and then passeth to other masters: and

what is a man profited, though he gain the world, if he lose his life, for then he can enjoy the world no longer; much less if he lose his soul, and that be drowned in destruction and perdition, as multitudes are by the love of money.

Now, though Solomon instances only in this temptation to rob on the high-way, yet he intends hereby to wean us against all other evils, which sinners entice men to; such are the ways of the drunkards and unclean, they are indulging themselves in those pleasures which tend to their ruin, both here and for ever; and therefore consent not to them.

20. ¶ Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets: 21. She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, *saying,* 22. How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? 23. Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. 24. ¶ Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; 25. But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: 26. I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; 27. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. 28. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: 29. For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD. 30. They would none of my counsel: They despised all my reproof. 31. Therefore shall they eat of the fruits of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. 32. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. 33. But whoso hearkeneth unto me, shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

Solomon having shewed how dangerous it is to hearken to the temptations of Satan, here shews how dangerous it is not to hearken to the calls of God, which we shall for ever rue the neglect of. Observe,

1. By whom God calls to us; by wisdom. It is *wisdom* that *crieth without.* The word is plural, wisdoms, for as there is infinite wisdom in God, so there is the *manifest wisdom of God,* Eph. iii. 10. God speaks to the children of men by all the kinds of wisdom, and as in every will, so in every word of God there is a counsel. (1.) *Human understanding is wisdom,* the light and law of nature, the powers and faculties of reason, and the office of conscience, *Job xxxviii. 36.* By these God speaks to the children of men, and reasons with them; *The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord;* and wherever men go, they may hear a voice behind them, *saying, This is the way;* and the voice of conscience is the voice of God, and not always a still small voice, but sometimes it cries. (2.) *Civil government is wisdom,* it is God's ordinance, magistrates are his vicegerents, God by David had *said to the fools, deal not foolishly,* *Psal. lxxv. 4.* In the opening of the gates, and in the places of concourse, where courts were kept, the judges, the wisdom of the nation call to wicked people in God's name, to repent and reform. (3.) *Divine revelation is wisdom,* all its dictates, all its laws are wise as wisdom it self, God doth, by the written word, by the law of Moses, which sets before us the blessing and the curse, by the priests lips which keep knowledge, by his servants the prophets, and all the ministers of this word, declare his mind to sinners, and give them warning as plainly as that which is proclaimed in the streets or courts of judicature by the criers. God in his word, not only opens the case, but argues it with the children of men. *Come now, and let us reason together,* Isa. i. 18. (4.) *Christ himself is wisdom,* is wisdoms, for in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and he is the centre of all divine revelation, not only the *essential Wisdom,* but the *eternal Word,* by whom God speaks to us, and to whom he has committed all judgment; he it is therefore, that here both pleads with sinners, and passeth sentence on them, he calls himself wisdom, *Luke vii. 35.*

2. How he calls to us, and in what manner, (1.) Very publicly, that whosoever hath ears to hear may hear, since all are welcome to take the benefit of what is said, and all are concerned to heed it. The rules of wisdom are published *without in the streets,* not in the schools only, or in the palaces of princes, but in the *chief places of concourse,* among the common people, that pass and repass in the opening of the gates, and in the city. It is comfortable casting the net of the gospel there where there is a multitude of fish, in hopes that then some will be inclosed. This was fulfilled in our Lord Jesus, who taught openly in the temple, and in crowds of people, and in secret said nothing, John xviii. 20. and charged

charged his ministers to *proclaim* his gospel *on the house-top*, Matt. x. 27. God faith, *Isa. xlv. 19. I have not spoken in secret*; there is *no speech or language, where wisdom's voice is not heard*. Truth seeks not corners, nor is virtue ashamed of it self. (2.) Very pathetically; she cries, and again she cries as one in earnest; *Jesus stood and cried. She utters her voice, she utters her words* with all possible clearness and affection. God is desirous to be heard and heeded.

3. What the call of God and Christ is.

(1.) He reproves sinners for their folly, and their obstinate persisting in it, *ver. 22*. Observe, 1. Who they are that wisdom here reproves and expostulates with. In general, they are such as are simple, and therefore might justly be despised; such as love simplicity, and therefore might justly be despaired of; but we must use the means even with those that we have little hopes of, because we know not what divine grace may do. Three sorts of persons are here called to. (1.) *Simple ones that love simplicity*.

Sin is simplicity, and sinners are simple ones; they do foolishly, very foolishly; and the condition of those is very bad that love simplicity, are fond of their simple notions of good and evil, their simple prejudices against the ways of God, and are in their element when they are doing a simple thing, sporting themselves in their own deceivings, and flattering themselves in their wickedness.

(2.) *Scorners that delight in scorning*. Proud people that take a pleasure in hectoring all about them; jovial people that banter all mankind, and make a jest of every thing that comes in their way. But scoffers at religion are especially meant, the worst of sinners that scorn to submit to the truths and laws of Christ, and to the reproofs and admonitions of his word, and take a pride in running down every thing that is sacred and serious. (3.) *Fools that hate knowledge*.

None but fools hate knowledge; those only are enemies to religion that do not understand it aright. And they are the worst of fools that hate to be instructed, and hate to be reformed, and have a rooted antipathy to serious godliness. 2. How the reproof is expressed. How long will ye do so? This implies, that the God of heaven desires the conversion and reformation of sinners, and not their ruin; that he is much displeased with their obstinacy and dilatoriness; that he waits to be gracious, and is willing to reason the case with them.

(2.) He invites them to repent and become wise, *ver. 23*. And here, 1. The precept is plain. *Turn you at my reproof*. We do not make a right use of the reproofs that are given us for that which is evil, if we do not turn from it to that which is good, for this end the reproof was given. Turn, *i. e.* return to your right mind; turn to God, turn to your duty, turn and live. 2. The promises are very encouraging. They that love simplicity, find themselves under a moral impotency to change their own mind and way, they cannot turn by any power of their own; to this God answers, *Behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you*, set your selves to do what you can, and the grace of God shall set in with you, and work in you both to will and to do that good, which without that grace you could not do. Help thy self, and God will help thee; *stretch forth thy withered hand*, and Christ will strengthen and heal it. 1. The author of this grace is the Spirit, and that is promised, *I will pour out my Spirit unto you*, as oil, as water, you shall have the Spirit *in abundance, rivers of living water*, John vii. 38. our heavenly Father *will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him*. 2. The means of this grace is the word, which if we take it aright will turn us, it is therefore promised, *I will make known my words unto you*, not only speak them to you, but make them known, *i. e.* give you to understand them. Note, Special grace is necessary to a sincere conversion. But that grace shall never be denied to any that honestly seek it, and submit to it.

(3.) He reads the doom of those that continue obstinate against all these means and methods of grace. It is large and very terrible, *ver. 24—32*. Wisdom having called sinners to return, pauses a while, to see what effect the call has, *hearkens and hears, but they speak not aright*, Jer. viii. 6. and therefore she goes on to tell them, what will be in the end hereof.

1. The crime is recited, and it is highly provoking.

See what it is, for which judgment will be given against impenitent sinners in the great day, and you will say they deserve it, and the Lord is righteous in it: It is in short rejecting Christ, and the offers of his grace, and refusing to submit to the terms of his gospel, which would have saved them both from the curse of the law of God, and from the dominion of the law of sin.

(1.) Christ called to them, to warn them of their danger, he *stretched out his hand* to offer them mercy; nay, to have helped them out of their miserable condition, *stretched out his hand* for them to *take hold of*, but they *refused*, and *no man regarded*; some were careless and never heeded it, nor took notice of what was said to them; others were wilful, and though they could not avoid hearing the will of Christ, yet they gave him a flat denial, they *refused*, *ver. 24*. They were in love with their folly, and would not be made wise. They were obstinate to all the methods that were taken to reclaim them, God *stretched out his hand* in mercies bestowed upon them, and when those would not work upon them, in corrections, but all in vain, they regarded the operations of his hand no more than the declarations of his mouth.

(2.) Christ reproved and counselled them, not only reproved them for what they did amiss, but counsels them to do better, those are *reproofs of instruction*, and evidences of love and good-will, but they *set at nought* all the counsel, as not worth heeding, and *would none of his reproof*, as if it were below them to be reproved by him, and as if they had never done any thing that deserved reproof, *ver. 25*. This is repeated, *ver. 30*. They *would none of my counsel*, but rejected it with disdain; they called reproofs reproaches, and took them heinously, *Jer. vi. 10*. Nay, *they despised all my reproof*, as if it were all a jest, and not worth taking notice of. Note, Those are marked for ruin that are deaf to reproof and good counsel.

(3.) They were exhorted to submit to the government of right reason and religion, but they rebelled against both. 1. Reason should not rule them, for *they hated knowledge*, *ver. 29*. hated the light of divine truth, because it discovered to them the evil of their deeds, *John iii. 20*. They hated to be told that which they could not bear to know. 2. Religion should not rule them, for they *did not chuse the fear of the Lord*, but chose to walk in the way of *their heart, and in the sight of their eye*. They were pressed to *set God always before them*, but they chose rather to *cast him* and his fear *behind their backs*. Note, Those who do not *chuse the fear of the Lord* shew that they *have no knowledge*.

2. The sentence is pronounced, and it is certainly ruining. They that will not submit to God's government, will certainly perish under his wrath and curse, and the gospel it self will not relieve them. They would not take the benefit of God's mercy when it was offered them, and therefore justly fall as victims to his justice, *Prov. xxix. 1*. The threatenings here will have their full accomplishment in the judgment of the great day, and the eternal misery of the impenitent, of which yet there are some earnest in present judgments.

1. Now sinners are in prosperity and secure, they live at ease, and set sorrow at defiance. But (1.) Their *calamity will come*, *ver. 26*. sickness will come, and those diseases which they shall apprehend to be the very arrests and harbingers of death. Other troubles will come in mind, in estate, which will convince them of their folly in setting God at a distance. (2.) Their calamity will put them into a great fright. Fear seizeth them, and they are jealous that bad will be worse: when publick judgments are abroad the *sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness surpriseth the hypocrites*, death is the *king of terrors* to them, *Job xv. 21, &c. xviii. 11, &c.* this fear will be their continual torment. (3.) According to their fright will it be to them. Their *fear shall come*, *i. e.* the thing they were afraid of shall befall them, it shall *come as desolation*, as a mighty deluge bearing down all before it, it shall be their *destruction*, their total and final destruction, and it shall come *as a whirlwind*, which suddenly and forcibly drives away all the chaff. Note, Those that will not admit the fear of God, lay themselves open to all other fears, and their fears will not prove causeless. (4.) Their fright will then be turned into despair: *distress and anguish shall come upon them*, for being fallen into the pit they were afraid of they shall see no way to escape, *ver. 27*. Saul cries out, *2 Sam. i. 9. Anguish is come upon me*; and in hell there is *weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth* for anguish; *Tribulation and anguish to the soul* of the sinner, the fruit of the *indignation and wrath of the righteous God*, Rom. ii. 8, 9.

2. Now God pities their folly, but he will then *laugh at their calamity*, *ver. 26*. I also will laugh at your distress, even as you laughed at my counsel. They that ridicule religion will thereby but make themselves ridiculous before all the world. The righteous will *laugh at them*, Psalm lii. 6. for God himself will. It intimates that they shall be for ever shut out of God's compassions; they have so long sinned against mercy, that they have now quite sinned it away; *his eye shall not spare, neither will he have pity*. Nay, his justice being glorified in their ruine, he will be pleased with it, though now he would rather they should *turn and live*. *Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries*.

3. Now God is ready to hear their prayers and to meet them with mercy, if they would but seek to him for it, but then the door will be shut, and they shall cry in vain, *ver. 28. Then shall they call upon me* when it is too late, *Lord, Lord, open to us*, they would then gladly be beholden to that mercy which now they reject and make light of, but *I will not answer*, because when I called they would not answer; all the answer then will be, *Depart from me, I know you not*. This has been the case of some even in this life, as of Saul, whom God answer'd not by *Urim*, or *prophets*; but ordinarily, while there is life there is room for prayer, and hope of speeding; and therefore this must refer to the inexorable justice of the last judgment. Then those that slighted God will *seek him early*, *i. e.* earnestly, but in vain, *they shall not find him*, because they sought him not when he might be found, *Isa. lv. 6*. The rich man in hell begged, but was denied.

4. Now they are eager upon their own way and fond of their own devices, but then they will have enough of them, *ver. 31*. according to the proverb, *Let men drink as they brew*, they shall *eat the fruit of their own way*, their wages shall be according to their work, and as was their choice, *so shall their doom be*, Gal. vi. 7, 8. Note, 1. There is a natural tendency in sin to destruction, *Jam. i. 15*. Sinners are certainly miserable if they do but *eat the fruit*

fruit of their own way. 2. They that perish must thank themselves, and can lay no blame upon any other. It is *their own device*, let them make their boast of it. God *chooseth their delusions*, Isa. lxvi. 4.

5. Now they value themselves upon their worldly prosperity, but then both shall help to aggravate their ruin, ver. 32. 1. They are now proud that they can turn away from God, and get clear of the restraints of religion, but that very thing shall slay them; the remembrance of it shall cut them to the heart. 2. They are now proud of their own security and sensuality, but *the ease of the simple* (so the margin reads it) *shall slay them*; the more secure they are, the more certain, and the more dreadful will their destruction be, *and the prosperity of fools shall help to destroy them*; by puffing them up with pride, gluing their hearts to the world, furnishing them with fuel for their lusts, and hardning their hearts in their evil ways.

6. He concludes with an assurance of safety and happiness to all those that submit to the instructions of wisdom, ver. 33. *Whoso hearkeneth unto me*, and will be ruled by me, he shall, 1. Be safe; he shall dwell under the special protection of heaven, so that nothing shall do him any real hurt. 2. He shall be easy, and have no disquieting apprehensions of danger; he shall not only be safe from evil, but *quiet from the fear of it*. *Though the earth be removed, yet shall not they fear*. Would we be safe from evil, and quiet from the fear of it, let religion always rule us, and the word of God be our counsellor: That is the way to *dwell safely* in this world, and to *be quiet from the fear of evil* in the other world.

C H A P. II.

Solomon having foretold the destruction of those that are obstinate in their impiety, in this chapter applies himself to those who are willing to be taught: And, 1. He shews them, that if they would diligently use the means of knowledge and grace, they should obtain of God that knowledge and grace which they seek, ver. 1,—9. 2. He shews them of what unspeakable advantage it would be to them. (1.) It would preserve them from the snares of evil men, ver. 10,—15. and of evil women, ver. 16,—19. (2.) It would direct them into, and keep them in the way of good men, ver. 20,—22. So that in this chapter we are taught, both how to get wisdom, and how to use it when we have it, that we may neither seek it, nor receive it in vain.

1. **M**Y son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee. 2. So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding: 3. Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and lifteth up thy voice for understanding: 4. If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her, as for hid treasures: 5. Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD; and find the knowledge of God. 6. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. 7. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. 8. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. 9. Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.

Job had asked long before this, *Where shall wisdom be found? and whence cometh wisdom?* Job xxviii. 12, 20. and had given this general answer, ver. 23. *God knoweth the place of it*; but Solomon here goes further, and tells us both where we may find it, and how we may get it.

We are here told,

1. What means we must use that we may obtain wisdom.

(1.) We must closely attend to the word of God, for that is the word of wisdom *which is able to make us wise to salvation*, ver. 1, 2. 1. We must be convinced that the words of God are the fountain and standard of wisdom and understanding, and that we need not desire to be wiser than they will make us. We must *incline our ear*, and *apply our hearts* to them, as to wisdom and understanding it self: many wise things may be found in human compositions, but divine revelation, and true religion built upon it, is all wisdom. 2. We must accordingly receive the word of God with all readiness of mind, and bid it welcome, even the commandments as well as the promises, without murmuring or disputing: *Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears*. 3. We must hide them with us, as we do our treasures, which we are afraid of being robbed of. We must not only receive but retain the word of God, and lodge it in our hearts, that it may be always ready to us. 4. We must incline our ear to them, *i. e.* we must lay hold on all opportunities of hearing the word of God, and listen to it with attention and seriousness, as those that are afraid of letting it slip. 5. We must apply our hearts to them, else inclining the ear to them will stand us in no stead.

(2.) We must be much in prayer, ver. 3. We must cry after knowledge, as one that is ready to perish for hunger, begs hard for

bread; faint desires will not prevail, we must be importunate, as those that know the worth of knowledge, and our own want of it. We must cry as new born babes after the sincere milk of the word, 1 Pet. ii. 1. We must *lift our voice for understanding*, lift it up to heaven, from thence these good and perfect gifts must be expected, James i. 17. Job xxxviii. 34. We must *give our voice to understanding*, so the word is; speak for it, vote for it; submit the tongue to the command of wisdom; we must consecrate our voice to it; having applied our heart to it, we must employ our voice in seeking for it: Solomon could write *probatum est*, upon this method, he prayed for wisdom, and so obtained it.

(3.) We must be willing to take pains, ver. 4. we must *seek it as silver*, preferring it far before all the wealth of this world, and labouring in search of it as those that dig in the mines, who undergo great toil, and run great hazards, with indefatigable industry, and invincible constancy and resolution, in pursuit of the ore; or as those that will be rich, rise up early, and sit up late, and turn every stone to get money, and fill their treasures: Thus diligent must we be in the use of the means of knowledge, following on to know the Lord.

2. What success we may hope for in the use of these means; our labour shall not be in vain; for, 1. We shall know how to maintain our acquaintance and communion with God; *Thou shalt understand the fear of the Lord*, ver. 5. *i. e.* thou shalt know how to worship him aright, shalt be led into the meaning and mystery of every ordinance, and be enabled to answer the end of its institution. *Thou shalt find the knowledge of God*, which is necessary to our fearing him aright. It concerns us to understand how much it is our interest to know God, and to evidence it by agreeable affections towards him, and adorations of him. 2. We shall know how to carry it aright towards all men, ver. 9. *Thou shalt understand*, by the word of God, *righteousness, and judgment, and equity*; shalt learn those principles of justice and charity, and fair dealing, as shall guide and govern thee in the whole course of thy conversation, shall make thee fit for every relation, every business, and faithful to every trust. It shall give thee not only a right notion of justice, but a disposition to practise it, and to render to all their due; for those that do not do justly, do not rightly understand it. This will lead them into *every good path*, for the scripture will *make the man of God perfect*. Note, Those have the best knowledge that know their duty, Psalm cxi. ult.

3. What ground we have to hope for this success in our pursuits of wisdom; we must take our encouragement herein from God only, ver. 6, 7, 8.

(1.) God has wisdom to bestow, ver. 6. *The Lord* not only is wise himself, but he *gives wisdom*, and that is more than the wisest men in the world can do, for it is God's prerogative to open the understanding. All the wisdom that is in any creature is his gift, his free gift, and he gives it liberally, James i. 5. has given it to many, and is still giving it: to him therefore let us apply ourselves for it.

(2.) He hath blessed the world with a revelation of his will. *Out of his mouth*, by the law and the prophets, by the written word, and by his ministers, both which are his mouth to the children of men, *cometh knowledge and understanding*, such a discovery of truth and good, as if we admit and receive the impressions of, will make us truly knowing and intelligent. It is both an engagement and an encouragement to search after wisdom, that we have the scriptures to search, in which we may find it, if we seek it diligently.

(3.) He hath particularly provided, that good men, who are sincerely disposed to do his will, shall have that *knowledge and understanding* which is necessary for them, John vii. 17. Let them seek, and they shall find it, let them ask, and it shall be given them, ver. 7, 8. Observe here, 1. Who they are that are thus favoured. They are *the righteous*, on whom the image of God is renewed, which consists in righteousness; and those *that walk uprightly*, that are honest in their dealings both with God and man, and make conscience of doing their duty as far as they know it. They are *his saints*, devoted to his honour, and set apart for his service. 2. What is it that is provided for them? 1. Instruction. The means of wisdom are given to all, but wisdom it self, *sound wisdom*, is laid up for the righteous, laid up in Christ their head, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and who is made of God to us wisdom. The same that is the spirit of revelation in the word, is a spirit of wisdom in the souls of them that are sanctified; that wisdom of the prudent which is to understand his way; and it is sound wisdom, its foundations firm, its principles solid, and its products of lasting advantage. 2. Satisfaction; some read it, *He lays up substance for the righteous*, not only substantial knowledge, but substantial happiness and comfort, Prov. viii. 21. Riches are things that are not, and they that have them only fancy themselves happy: but what is laid up in the promises, and in heaven for the righteous, will make them truly, thoroughly, and eternally happy. 3. Protection. Even they *that walk uprightly* may be brought into danger for the trial of their faith, but God is, and will be *a buckler to them*, so that nothing that happens to them shall do them any real hurt, or possess them with any frightful apprehensions; they are safe, and they shall think themselves so. *Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield*. It is their way, the

paths of judgment in which they walk, that the Lord knows, and owns, and takes care of. 4. Grace to persevere to the end. If we depend upon God, and seek to him for wisdom, he will uphold us in our integrity, will enable us to *keep the paths of judgment*, however we may be tempted to turn aside out of them; for he *preserveth the way of his saints*, that it be not perverted, and so preserveth them in it safe and blameless to his heavenly kingdom. The assurances God has given us of his grace, if duly improved, will excite and quicken our endeavours in doing our duty. *Work out your salvation, for God works in you.*

10. ¶ When wisdom entreth into thine heart; and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; 11. Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: 12. To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things. 13. Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness: 14. Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked. 15. Whose ways are crooked, and they froward in their paths. 16. To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words: 17. Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God. 18. For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. 19. None that go unto her, return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life. 20. That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous. 21. For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. 22. But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.

The scope of these verses is to shew, 1. What great advantage true wisdom will be of to us; it will keep us from the paths of sin, which lead to ruin, and will therein do us a greater kindness, than if it enriched us with all the wealth of the world. 2. What good use we should make of the wisdom God gives us; we must use it for our own conduct in the paths of virtue, and for the arming of us against temptations of every kind. 3. By what rules we may try ourselves, whether we have this wisdom or no; this tree will be known by its fruits; if we be truly wise, it will appear by our care to avoid all evil company, and evil practices.

This wisdom will be of use to us,

1. For our preservation from evil, from the evil of sin, and consequently from the evil of trouble that attends it. In general, *ver. 10, 11.* when wisdom has intire possession of thee, it will *keep thee*. And when has it an entire possession of us? 1. When it has dominion over us: when it not only fills the head with notions, but *enters into the heart*, and has a commanding power and influence upon that; when it is upon the throne there, and gives law to the affections and passions; when it *enters into the heart*, as the leaven into the dough, to diffuse its relish there, and to change it into its own image, then it is likely to do us good. 2. When we have delight in it: when knowledge becomes *pleasant to the soul*; when thou beginnest to relish it as the most agreeable entertainment, and art subject to its rules of choice, and with satisfaction; when thou callest the practice of virtue not a slavery and a task, but liberty and pleasure, and a life of serious godliness the most comfortable life a man can live in this world, then thou wilt find the benefit of it. Though its restraints should be in some respects unpleasant to the body, yet even those must be *pleasant to the soul*. When it is come to this with us, *discretion shall preserve us*, and keep us; God keeps *the way of his saints*, *ver. 8.* by giving them discretion to keep out of harm's way, to keep themselves that the wicked one touch them not. Note, A principle of grace reigning in the heart, will be a powerful preservative both against corruptions within, and temptations without, *Eccles. ix. 16, 18.*

More particularly, wisdom will preserve us,

(1.) From men of corrupt principles; atheistical, profane men, that make it their business to debauch young mens judgments, and instil into their minds prejudices against religion, and arguments for vice. It will *deliver thee from the way of the evil man*, *ver. 12.* and a blessed deliverance it will be, as from the very jaws of death, *from the way in which he walks*, and in which he would persuade thee to walk. The enemy is spoken of as one, *ver. 12.* an *evil man*, but afterwards as many, *ver. 13.* there is a club, a gang of them, that are in confederacy against religion, and join hand in hand for the support of the devil's kingdom, and the interests of it.

1. They have a spirit of contradiction to that which is good; they *speak froward things*; they say all they can against religion, both to shew their own enmity to it, and to dissuade others from it. They are advocates for Satan, they plead for Baal, and *pervert the right ways of the Lord*. How peevishly will profane wits argue for sin; and with what frowardness will they carp at the word of God! Wisdom will keep us either from conversing with such men, or at least from being ensnared by them.

Nº. 48.

2. They are themselves apostates from that which is good, and such are commonly the most malicious and dangerous enemies religion hath, witness Julian; *ver. 13.* They *leave the paths of uprightness*, which they were trained up in, and had set out in; shake off the influences of their education, and break off the thread of their hopeful beginnings, *to walk in the ways of darkness*, in those wicked ways which hate the light, in which men are led blindfold by ignorance and error, and which lead men into utter darkness. The ways of sin are ways of darkness, uncomfortable and unsafe; what fools are they that leave the plain, pleasant, lightsome paths of uprightness, to walk in those ways, *Psal. lxxxii. 5.* 1 *John ii. 11.*

3. They take a pleasure in sin, both in committing it themselves, and in seeing others commit it, *ver. 14.* They *rejoice in an opportunity to do evil*, and in the accomplishment and success of any wicked project. It is sport to a fool to do mischief; nor is any sight more grateful to them, than to see *the frowardness of the wicked*, to see those that were hopeful drawn into the ways of sin, and then to see them hardened and confirmed in those ways. They are pleased if they can discern that the devil's kingdom gets ground; see *Rom. i. 32.* such a height of impiety are they arrived to.

4. They are resolute in sin, *ver. 15.* Their *ways are crooked*, a great many windings and turnings to escape the pursuit of their convictions, and break the force of them; some fly excuse, some subtil evasion or other, their deceitful hearts furnish them with, for the strengthening of their hands in their wickedness, and in the crooked mazes of that labyrinth, they secure themselves from the arrests of God's word and their own consciences; for they are *froward in their paths*, i. e. they are resolved to go on in them, whatever is said against it. Every wise man will shun the company of such as these.

(2.) From women of corrupt practices. The former lead to spiritual wickednesses, the lusts of the un sanctified mind; these lead to *fleshy lusts*, which defile the body, that living temple, but without *war against the soul*. The adulteress is here called *the strange woman*, because no man that hath any wisdom or goodness in him, will have any acquaintance with her; she is to be shunned by every Israelite; as if she were a heathen, and a stranger to that sacred commonwealth. A *strange woman* indeed! utterly estranged from all principles of reason, virtue, and honour.

It is a great mercy to be delivered from the allurements of the adulteress, considering,

1. How false she is; and who will have any dealings with those that are made up of treachery! She is a *strange woman*; for, 1. She is false to him whom she enticeth; she speaks him fair, tells him how much she admires him above any man, and what a kindness she has for him, but she *flatters with her words*, she has no true affection for him, nor any desire of his welfare, no more than Delilah had of Sampson's; all she designs is to pick his pocket, and gratify a base lust of her own. 2. She is false to her husband, and violates the sacred obligations she lies under to him; he was *the guide of her youth*, by marrying him, she chose him to be so, and submitted herself to his conduct, with a promise to attend him only, and forsake all other; but she has *forsaken him*, and therefore it cannot be thought that she should be faithful to any one else; and whoever entertains her is partaker with her in her falsehood. 3. She is false to God himself; she *forgetteth the covenant of her God*, the marriage covenant, *ver. 17.* to which God is not only a witness, but a party, for he having instituted the ordinance, both sides vow to him to be true to each other. It is not her husband only that she sins against, but her God, who therefore *will judge whoremongers and adulterers*, because they despise the oath, and break the covenant, *Ezek. xvii. 18. Mal. ii. 14.*

2. How fatal it will prove to those that fall in league with her, *ver. 18, 19.* Let others harms be our warnings; take heed of the sin of whoredom; for, 1. The ruin of those who are guilty of it, is certain and unavoidable, if they do not repent. It is a sin that has a direct tendency to the killing of the soul, the extinguishing of all good affections and dispositions in it, and the exposing of it to the wrath and curse of God, and the sword of his justice. They that live in forbidden pleasures are dead while they live. Let discretion preserve every man, not only from the naughty woman, but from the naughty house, for the *house inclines to death*, it is in the road that leads directly to eternal death; *and her paths unto Rephaim*, to the giants, so some read it, the sinners of the old world, who living in luxury, and excess of riot, were cut down out of time, and their foundation overthrown with a flood. Our Lord Jesus deters us from sinful pleasures, with the consideration of everlasting torments which follow them, *where the worm dies not, nor is the fire quenched.* See *Matt. v. 28, 29.*

2. Their repentance and recovery is extremely hazardous; *none, or next none, that go into her, return again*: It is very rare that any who are caught in this snare of the devil recover themselves, so much is the heart hardened, and the mind blinded, by the deceitfulness of this sin. Having once lost their *hold of the paths of life*, they know not how to take hold of them again, but are perfectly befotted and bewitched with those base lusts.

Many learned interpreters think that this caution against the *strange woman*, besides the literal sense, is to be understood figuratively, as a caution, 1. Against idolatry, which is spiritual whoredom: Wisdom will keep thee from all familiarity with the wor-

shippers of images, and all inclination to join with them, which had for many ages been of such pernicious consequence to Israel, and proved so to Solomon himself. 2. Against the debauching of the intellectual powers and faculties of the soul, by the lusts and appetites of the body. Wisdom will keep thee from being captivated by the carnal mind, and from subjecting the spirit to the dominion of the flesh, that notorious adulterers which *forakes its guide*, violates the *covenant of our God*, which *inclines to death*, and which, when it has got an undisturbed dominion, makes the case of the soul desperate.

2. This wisdom will be of use to guide and direct us in that which is good, *ver. 20. That thou mayest walk in the way of good men.* We must therefore avoid the way of the *evil man*, and the *strange woman*, that we may walk in good ways; must therefore *cease to do evil*, that we may *learn to do well*. Note, 1. There is a way which is peculiarly the way of good men, the way in which good men as such, and as far as they have really been such, have always walked. 2. It will be our wisdom to walk in that way, to ask for the good old way, and walk therein, *Jer. vi. 16. Heb. vi. 12. xii. 1.* and we must not only walk in that way a while, but we must keep it, keep in it, and never turn aside out of it: *The paths of the righteous are the paths of life*, which all that are wise, having taken hold of, will keep their hold of. "That thou mayest imitate those excellent persons, the patriarchs and prophets, (so bishop Patrick paraphraseth it) and be preserved in the *paths of those righteous men who followed after them.*"

We must not only chuse our way in general, by the good examples of the saints, but must also take directions from them in the choice of our particular paths; observe the track, and go forth by the footsteps of the flock.

Two reasons are here given why we should thus chuse,

1. Because mens integrity will be their establishment, *ver. 21.* It will be the establishment, 1. Of their persons; *The upright shall dwell in the land*, peaceably and quietly, as long as they live; and their uprightness will contribute to it, as it settles their minds, guides their counsels, gains them the good will of their neighbours, and entitles them to God's special favour. 2. Of their families; *the perfect in their posterity shall remain in it*: They shall dwell and remain for ever in the heavenly Canaan, of which the earthly one was but a type.

2. Because mens iniquity will be their destruction, *ver. 22.* See what comes of *the wicked* that choose the way of *the evil man*, they *shall be cut off*, not only from heaven hereafter, and all hopes of that, but *from the earth* now, on which they set their affections, and in which they lay up their treasure. They think to take root in it, but they and their families *shall be rooted out of it*, in judgment to them, but in mercy to the earth. There is a day coming, which *shall leave them neither root nor branch*, *Mal. iv. 1.* Let that wisdom then *enter into our hearts*, and be *pleasant to our souls*, which will keep us out of a way that will end thus.

C H A P. III.

This chapter is one of the most excellent in all this book; both for argument to persuade us to be religious, and for direction therein.

1. *We must be constant to our duty, because that is the way to be happy*, *ver. 1.—4.* 2. *We must live a life of dependence upon God, because that is the way to be safe*, *ver. 6, 7.* 3. *We must keep up the fear of God, because that is the way to be healthful*, *ver. 7, 8.* 4. *We must serve God with our estates, because that is the way to be rich*, *ver. 9, 10.* 5. *We must bear afflictions well, because that is the way to get good by them*, *ver. 11, 12.* 6. *We must take pains to obtain wisdom, because that is the way to gain her, and to gain by her*, *ver. 13.—20.* 7. *We must always govern ourselves by the rules of wisdom, of right reason and religion, because that is the way to be always easy*, *ver. 21.—26.* 8. *We must do all the good we can, and no hurt to our neighbours, because according as men are just or unjust, charitable or uncharitable, humble or haughty, accordingly they shall receive of God*, *ver. 27.—35.* By all which it appears what a tendency religion has to make men both blessed, and blessings.

1. **M**Y son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: 2. For length of days, and long life, and peace shall they add to thee. 3. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck, write them upon the table of thine heart. 4. So shalt thou find favour, and good understanding in the sight of God and man. 5. ¶ Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

We are here taught to live a life of communion with God; and without controversy, great is this mystery of godliness, and of great consequence to us, and as is here shewed will be of unspeakable advantage.

1. We must have a continual regard to God's precepts, *ver. 1.* 2. we must, 1. Fix God's law and his commandment as our rule,

by which we will in every thing be ruled, and to which we will yield obedience. 2. We must acquaint ourselves with them; for we cannot be said to forget that which we never knew. 3. We must remember them so as that they may be ready to us whenever we have occasion to use them. 4. Our wills and affections must be subject to them, and must in every thing conform to them. Not only our heads, but our hearts must *keep God's commandments*; in them, as in the ark of the testimony, both the tables of the law must be deposited.

To encourage us to submit ourselves to all the restraints and injunctions of the divine law, we are assured, *ver. 2.* that it is the certain way to long life and prosperity. 1. It is the way to be long-liv'd. God's commandments *shall add to us length of days*; to a good useful life on earth, they shall add an eternal life in heaven, *length of days for ever and ever*, *Psalms xxi. 4.* God shall be our life and the length of our days, and that will be indeed long life, with an addition. But because length of days may possibly become a burthen, and a trouble, it is promised, 2. That it shall prove the way to be easy too, so that even the days of old age shall not be evil days, but days in which thou shalt have pleasure: *Peace shall they be continually adding to thee.* As grace increaseth, peace, shall, and of the increase of Christ's government and peace, in the heart as well as in the world, *there shall be no end: Great and growing peace have they that love the law.*

2. We must have a continual regard to God's promises, which go along with his precepts, and are to be received and retained with them, *ver. 3. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee*; God's mercy in promising, and his truth in performing; do not forfeit those, but live up to them, and preserve thine interest in them; do not forget these, but live upon them, and take the comfort of them: *Bind them about thy neck*, as the most graceful ornament. It is the greatest honour we are capable of in this world, to have an interest in the mercy and truth of God. *Write them upon the table of thine heart*, as dear to thee, thy portion, and most delightful entertainment; take a pleasure in applying them, and thinking them over. Or it may be meant of the mercy and truth which is our duty; piety and sincerity; charity towards men, fidelity towards God: Let these be fixed and commanding principles in thee.

To encourage us to do this we are assured, *ver. 4.* that this is the way to recommend ourselves both to our Creator and fellow-creatures: *So shalt thou find favour, and good understanding.* 1. A good man seeks the favour of God in the first place, is ambitious of the honour of being accepted of the Lord, and he shall find that favour, and with it a good understanding; God will make the best of him, and put a favourable construction upon what he saith and doth: He shall be owned as one of wisdom's children, and shall have praise with God as one having that *good understanding* which is ascribed to all them *that do his commandments.* 2. He wishes to have favour with men also, (as Christ had, *Luke ii. 52.*) to be *accepted of the multitude of his brethren*, *Ester x. 3.* and that he shall have, they shall understand him aright, and in his dealings with them he shall appear to be prudent, shall act intelligently and with discretion. *He shall have good success*, so some translate it; the common effect of good understanding.

3. We must have a continual regard to God's providence, must own and depend upon it in all our affairs, both by faith and prayer.

(1.) By faith. We must repose an intire confidence in the wisdom, power and goodness of God, assuring ourselves of the extent of his providence to all the creatures, and all their actions. We must therefore *trust in the Lord with all our hearts*, *ver. 5.* we must believe that he is able to do what he will, wise to do what is best and good according to his promise to do what is best for us, if we love him and serve him. We must with an intire submission and satisfaction depend upon him to perform all things for us, and not *lean to our own understanding*; as if we could by any forecast of our own, without God, help ourselves, and bring our affairs to a good issue. Those who know themselves, cannot but find their own understanding to be a broken reed, which if they lean to, it will certainly fail them. In all our conduct we must be diffident of our own judgment, and confident of God's wisdom, power and goodness, and therefore must follow providence, and not force it. That often proves best which was least our own doing.

(2.) By prayer, *ver. 6. In all thy ways acknowledge God.* We must not only in our judgment believe that there is an over-ruling hand of God, ordering and disposing of us and all our affairs, but we must solemnly own it, and address ourselves to him accordingly. We must ask his leave, and not design any thing but what we are sure is lawful; ask his advice, and beg direction from him, not only when the case is difficult, when we know not what to do, no thanks to have our eyes up to him, but in every case be it never so plain. Ask success of him, as those that know *the race is not to the swift*; we must refer ourselves to him, as he from whom our judgment proceeds, and patiently, and with a holy indifferency wait his award. *In all our ways* that prove direct and fair and pleasant, in which we gain our point to our satisfaction, we must acknowledge God with thankfulness: *In all our ways* that prove cross and uncomfortable, and that are hedged up with thorns, we must acknowledge God with submission. Our eye must be ever towards God, to him we must in every thing make our requests known,

known, as Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh, Judg. xi. 11.

For our encouragement to do this, it is promised, *he shall direct thy paths*; so as that thy way shall be safe and good, and the issue happy at last. Note, They that put themselves under a divine conduct, shall always have the benefit of it. God will give them that wisdom which is profitable to direct, so as that they shall not turn aside into the by-paths of sin, and then will himself so wisely order the event, as that it shall be to their mind, or (which is equivalent) to their good. They that faithfully follow the pillar of cloud and fire, shall find, though it may lead them about, it leads them the right way, and will bring them to Canaan at last.

7. ¶ Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. 8. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones. 9. Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase. 10. So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. 11. ¶ My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD: neither be weary of his correction. 12. For whom the LORD loveth, he correcteth, even as a father the son, in whom he delighteth.

We have here before us three exhortations, each of them enforced with a good reason.

1. We must live in a humble and dutiful subjection to God and his government, *ver. 7. Fear the Lord*, as your sovereign Lord and Master, be ruled in every thing by your religion, and subject to the divine will. This must be, 1. A humble subjection; *Be not wise in thine own eyes*. Note, There is not a greater enemy to the power of religion, and the fear of God in the heart, than conceitedness of our own wisdom. They that have an opinion of their own sufficiency, think it below them, and a disparagement to them, to take their measures from, much more to hamper themselves with religion's rules. 2. A dutiful subjection; *Fear the Lord, and depart from evil*; take heed of doing any thing to offend him, and to forfeit his care. To *fear the Lord*, so as to *depart from evil*, is true wisdom and understanding, Job xxviii. 28. those that have it are truly wise, but self-denyingly so, and not *wise in their own eyes*.

For our encouragement thus to live in the fear of God, it is here promised, *ver. 8.* that it shall be as serviceable even to the outward man as our necessary food; it will be nourishing, *it shall be health to thy navel*; it will be strengthening, *it shall be marrow to thy bones*. That prudence, temperance, and sobriety, that calmness and composure of mind, that good government of the appetites and passions, which religion teaches, tends very much not only to the health of the soul, but to a good habit of body, which is very desirable, and without which our other enjoyments in this world are insipid. A plaster to the navel is a remedy against worms in children, perhaps, it was so in Solomon's time, and he may allude to it; religion kills the worms that breed in our corrupt hearts; envy is the rottenness of the bones, the sorrow of the world dries them, but hope and joy in God is marrow to them.

2. We must make a good use of our estates, and that is the way to increase them, *ver. 9, 10.* Here is,

(1.) A precept which makes it our duty to serve God with our estates: *Honour the Lord with thy substance*. It is the end of our creation and redemption to honour God, to be to him for a name and a praise; we are no other way capable of serving him but in his honour. His honour we must shew forth, and the honour we have for him. We must honour him not only *with our bodies and spirits which are his*, but with our estates too, for they also are his; we, and all our appurtenances, must be devoted to his glory. Worldly wealth is but poor substance, yet such as it is, we must honour God with it, and then, if ever, it becomes substantial. We must honour God, 1. *With our increase*. Where riches increase we are tempted to honour ourselves, *Deut. viii. 17.* and to set our hearts upon the world, *Psal. lxxii. 10.* but the more God gives us, the more we should study to honour him. It is meant of the increase of the earth, for we live upon annual products to keep us in constant dependence on God. 2. *With all our increase*; as God has prospered us in every thing, we must honour him. Our law will allow a prescription for a *modus decimandi*, but none *de non decimando*. 3. *With the first-fruits of all*, as Abel, *Gen. iv. 4.* This was the law, *Exod. xxiii. 19.* and the prophets, *Mal. iii. 10.* God that is the first and best, must have the first and best of every thing: his right is prior to all other, and therefore he must be served first. Note, It is our duty to make our worldly estates serviceable to our religion; use them, and the interest we have by them, for the promoting of religion; do good to the poor with what we have, and abound in all works of piety and charity; *devising liberal things*.

(2.) A promise, which makes it our interest to serve God with our estates; it is the way to make a little much, and much more; it is the surest and safest method of thriving: *So shall thy barns be filled with plenty*. He doth not say thy bags, but thy barns; not

thy wardrobe replenished, but thy presses; God shall bless thee with an increase of that which is for use, not for shew or ornament; for spending and laying out, not for hoarding and laying up: They that do good with what they have, shall have more to do more good with. Note, If we make our worldly estates serviceable to our religion, we shall find our religion very serviceable to the prosperity of our worldly affairs: *Godliness has the promise of the life that now is*, and most of the comfort of it. We mistake, if we think that giving will undo us, and make us poor; no, giving for God's honour will make us rich, *Hag. ii. 19.* What we gave we have.

3. We must carry ourselves aright under our afflictions, *ver. 11, 12.* This the apostle quotes, *Heb. xii. 5.* and calls it *an exhortation*, which *speaketh unto us as unto children*, with the authority and affection of a father. We are here in a world of trouble. Now observe,

(1.) What must be our care when we are in affliction; we must neither despise it, nor be weary of it. His exhortation before was to those that are rich and in prosperity, here to those that are poor and in adversity. 1. We must not despise an affliction, be it never so light and short, as if it were not worth taking notice of; or as if it were not sent of an errand, and therefore required no answer. We must not be stocks and stones, and Stoicks under our afflictions, insensible of them, hardning ourselves under them, and concluding we can easily get through them without God. 2. We must not be weary of an affliction, be it never so heavy and long, not *faint* under it, so the apostle renders it; not be dispirited, dispossessed of our own souls, or driven to despair; or to use any indirect means for our relief, and the redress of our grievances. We must not think that the affliction either presseth harder, or continues longer, than is meet; nor conclude deliverance will never come, because it doth not come so soon as we expect it.

(2.) What will be our comfort when we are in affliction. 1. That it is a divine correction; it is *the chastening of the Lord*; which, as it is a reason why we should submit to it, for it is folly to contend with a God of uncontested sovereignty, and irresistible power, so it is a reason why we should be satisfied in it; for we may be sure a God of unspotted purity doth us no wrong, and a God of infinite goodness means us no hurt. It is from God, and therefore must not be despised; for a slight put upon the messenger, is an affront to him that sends him: It is from God, and therefore we must not be weary of it, for he knows our frame, both what we need, and what we can bear. 2. That it is a fatherly correction; it comes not from his vindictive justice as a judge, but his wife affection as a father. The father correcteth *the son whom he loveth*, nay, and because he loves him, and desires he may be wise and good. He delights in that in his son which is amiable and agreeable, and therefore corrects him for the prevention and cure of that which would be a deformity to him, and an allay to his delight in him. Thus God hath said, *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten*, *Rev. iii. 19.* This is a great comfort to God's children under their afflictions, (1.) That they not only consist with, but flow from covenant love. (2.) That they are so far from doing them any real hurt, that, by the grace of God working with them, they do a great deal of good, and are happy means of their sanctification.

13. ¶ Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. 14. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. 15. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire, are not to be compared unto her. 16. Length of days is in her right hand: and in her left hand riches and honour. 17. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. 18. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her. 19. The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. 20. By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew.

Solomon had pressed us earnestly to seek diligently for wisdom, *chap. ii. 1, &c.* and had assured us that we should succeed in our sincere and constant pursuits. But the question is, What we shall get by it when we have found it? Prospect of advantage is the spring and spur of industry; he therefore shews us how much it will be to our profit, laying this down for an unquestionable truth, *Happy is the man that findeth wisdom*, that true wisdom which consists in the knowledge and love of God, and an intire conformity to all the intentions of his truths, providences, and laws. Now observe,

1. What it is to *find wisdom*, so as to be made happy by it. (1.) We must get it; he is the happy man that having found it makes it his own, gets both an interest in it and the possession of it; that *draws out understanding*; so the word is, *i. e.* 1. That derives it from God; having it not in himself, he draws it with the bucket of prayer from the fountain of all wisdom, *who gives liberally*. 2. That

2. That takes pains for it, as he doth that draws ore out of the mine; if it do not come easily, we must put to the more strength to draw it. 3. That improves in it; that having some understanding, draws it out by growing in knowledge, and making five talents ten. 4. That doth good with it; that draws out from the stock he hath, as wine from the vessel, and communicates to others for their instruction, *things new and old*. That is well got, and to good purpose, that is thus used to good purpose.

(2.) We must trade for it. We read here of the merchandise of wisdom; which intimates, 1. That we must make it our business, and not a by-business; as the merchant bestows the main of his thoughts and time upon his merchandise. 2. That we must venture all in it, as a stock in trade, and be willing to part with all for it. This is that pearl of great price, which when we have found, we must willingly sell all for the purchase of, *Matth. xiii. 45, 46. Buy the truth*, Prov. xxiii. 23. he doth not say at what rate, because we must buy at any rate, rather than miss it.

(3.) We must lay hold on it, as we lay hold on a good bargain when it is offered us, which we do the more carefully, if there be danger of having it taken out of our hands. We must apprehend with all our might, and put forth our utmost vigour in the pursuit of it; lay hold on all occasions to improve in it, and catch at the least of its dictates.

(4.) We must retain it; it is not enough to lay hold on wisdom, but we must keep our hold, hold it fast with a resolution never to let it go; but to persevere in the ways of wisdom to the end. We must *sustain it*, so some read it; must embrace it with all our might, as we do that which we would sustain. We must do all we can to support the declining interests of religion, in the places where we live.

2. What the happiness of those is that do find it.

1. It is a transcendent happiness, more than can be found in the wealth of this world, if we had never so much of it, *ver. 14, 15*. It is not only a surer, but a more gainful merchandise to trade for wisdom, for Christ and grace and spiritual blessings, than for silver and gold, and rubies; suppose a man to have got these in abundance; nay, to have all the things he can desire of this world (and who is it that ever had that?) (1.) All this would not purchase heavenly wisdom, no, it would *utterly be contemned*; it *cannot be gotten for gold*, Job xxviii. 15, &c. (2.) All this would not countervail the want of heavenly wisdom, nor be the ransom of a soul lost by its own folly. (3.) All this will not make a man half so happy no not in this world, as they are that have true wisdom, though they have none of all these things. (4.) Heavenly wisdom will procure that for us, and secure that to us, which silver and gold and rubies will not be the purchase of.

2. It is a true happiness; for it is inclusive of, and equivalent to all those things which are supposed to make men happy, *ver. 16, 17*. Wisdom is here represented as a bright and bountiful queen reaching forth gifts to her faithful and loving subjects, and offering them to all that will submit to her government.

(1.) Is length of days a blessing? Yes, the most valuable, life includes all good, and therefore she offers that in her right hand; religion puts us into the best methods of prolonging life, entitles us to the promises of it, and though our days on earth should be no more than our neighbours, yet it will secure to us everlasting life in a better world.

(2.) Are riches and honour accounted blessings? They are so, and them she reacheth out with *her left hand*. For as she is ready to embrace those that submit to her with both arms, so she is ready to give out to them with both hands. They shall have the wealth of this world, as far as infinite wisdom sees good for them, however, the true riches, by which men are rich towards God, are secured to them; nor is there any honour by birth or preferment, comparable to that which attends religion, that makes the *righteous more excellent than his neighbour*, recommends men to God, commands respect and veneration, with all the sober part of mankind, and will in the other world make those that are now buried in obscurity to *shine forth as the sun*.

(3.) Is pleasure courted as much as any thing? It is so, and it is certain, true piety hath in it the greatest true pleasure, *Her ways are ways of pleasantness*, i. e. the ways in which she has directed us to walk are such as we shall find abundance of delight and satisfaction in. All the enjoyments and entertainments of sense are not comparable to the pleasure which gracious souls have in communion with God and doing good. That which is the only right way to bring us to our journey's end, we must walk in fair or foul, pleasant or unpleasant; but the way of religion, as it is the right way, so it is a pleasant way, it is smooth and clean, and strewed with roses. *All her paths are peace*. There is not only peace in the end, but peace in the way; not only in the way of religion in general, but in the particular paths of that way, in all her paths, all the several acts, instances, and duties of it, one doth not imbitter what the other sweetens, as it is with the allays of this world, but they are all peace, not only sweet but safe; the saints enter into peace on this side heaven, and enjoy a present Sabbathism.

3. It is the happiness of paradise, *ver. 18. She is a tree of life*. True grace is that to the soul, which the *tree of life* would have been, from which our first parents were shut out, for eating of the

forbidden tree; it is a seed of immortality, a *well of living water, springing up to life eternal*. It is an earnest of the New Jerusalem in the midst of which is the *tree of life*, Rev. xxii. 2.—ii. 7. They that feed and feast on this heavenly wisdom, shall not only be healed by it of every fatal malady, but shall find an antidote against age and death, they shall *eat and live for ever*.

4. It is a participation of the happiness of God himself, for wisdom is his everlasting glory and blessedness, *ver. 19, 20*. This should make us in love with wisdom and understanding, that which God gives, that *the Lord by wisdom founded the earth*, so as that it cannot be removed, nor can ever fail of answering all the ends of its creation, to which it is admirably and unexceptionably fitted; *by understanding, he hath likewise established the heavens*, and directed all the motions of them in the best manner. The heavenly bodies are vast, yet there is no flaw in them; numerous, yet no disorder in them; the motion rapid, yet no wear or tear; the depths of the sea are broken up, and thence come the waters beneath the firmament, and *the clouds drop down the dews*, the waters from above the firmament; and all this by the divine wisdom and knowledge; therefore, *happy is the man that findeth wisdom*. For he will thereby be *thoroughly furnished for every good word and work*. Christ is that wisdom, by whom the worlds were made, and still consist; happy therefore are they to whom he is *made of God wisdom*, for he has wherewithal to make good all the foregoing promises of long life, riches and honour, for all the wealth of heaven, earth and seas is his.

¶ 21. My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion. 22. So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. 23. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. 24. When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet. 25. Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. 26. For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.

Solomon having pronounced them happy, that not only lay hold on wisdom, but retain her, here exhorts us therefore to retain her, assuring us that we ourselves shall have the comfort of doing so.

1. The exhortation is to have religion's rules always in view, and always at heart, *ver. 21*. 1. To have them always in view. *My son, let them not depart from thine eyes*, i. e. Let not thine eyes ever depart from them to wander after vanity. Have them always in mind, and do not forget them; be ever and anon thinking of them, and conversing with them, and never imagine that thou hast looked upon them long enough, and it is time now to lay them by, but as long as thou livest, keep up and cultivate thine acquaintance with them. He that learns to write, must always have his eye upon his copy, and not let that be out of his sight, and to the words of wisdom must they in like manner have a constant respect, that will walk circumspectly. 2. To have them always at heart; for it is in that treasury, the hidden man of the heart, that we must keep *sound wisdom and discretion*, keep to the principles of it, and keep in the ways of it: It is wealth that is worth keeping.

2. The argument to enforce this exhortation, is taken from the unspeakable advantage which wisdom thus kept will be of to us.

(1.) In respect of strength and satisfaction, it will be *life to thy soul*, *ver. 22*. it will quicken thee to thy duty when thou beginnest to be slothful and remiss, it will revive thee under thy troubles when thou beginnest to droop and despond. It will be thy spiritual life, an earnest of life eternal; life to the soul is life indeed.

(2.) In respect of honour and reputation. It shall be *grace to thy neck*, as a chain of gold, or a jewel. *Grace to thy jaws*, so the word is; grateful to thy *taste and relish*, so some; it shall infuse *grace unto all thou sayest*, so others; shall furnish thee with acceptable words, which shall gain thee credit.

(3.) In respect of safety and security; this he insists upon in four verses, the scope of which is to shew that *the effect of righteousness* (which is the same with wisdom here) is *quietness and assurance for ever*, Isa. xxxii. 17. Good people are taken under God's special protection, and therein they may have an intire satisfaction. They are safe, and may be easy.

1. In their motions by day, *ver. 23*. If our religion be our companion, it will be our convoy; *Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely*; the natural life, and all that belongs to it, shall be under the protection of God's providence; the spiritual life, and all its interests, under the protection of his grace, so that thou shalt be kept from falling into sin or trouble. Wisdom will direct us into, and keep us in the safe way, as far as may be from temptation; and will enable us to walk in it with a holy security; the way of duty, is the way of safety. We are in danger of falling, but wisdom will keep thee, that *thy foot shall not stumble* at those things which are an offence and overthrow to many, but which thou shalt know how to get over.

2. In their rest by night, *ver. 24.* In our retirements we lie exposed, and are most subject to frights, but keep up communion with God, and keep a good conscience, and then *when thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid* of fire, or thieves, or spectres, or any of the terrors of the darkness, knowing that when we and all our friends are asleep, yet he that keepeth Israel, and every true born Israelite neither slumbers nor sleeps; and to him thou hast committed thy self, and taken shelter under the shadow of his wings. *Thou shalt lie down,* and not need to sit up to keep guard; being lain down, thou shalt sleep, and not have thine eyes held waking by care and fear; and *thy sleep shall be sweet* and refreshing to thee, being not disturbed by any alarms from without or from within, *Psal. iv. 8.—cxvi. 7.* The way to have a good night, is to keep a good conscience; and the sleep as of the labouring man, so of the wife and godly man is sweet.

3. In their greatest straits and dangers. Integrity and uprightness will preserve us, so that we need *not be afraid of sudden fear*, *ver. 25.* The harms that surprize us, unthought of, giving us no time to arm ourselves by consideration, are most likely to put us into confusion. But let not the wife and good man forget himself, and then he will not give way to any fear that has torment, be the alarm never so sudden. Let him not fear the *desolation of the wicked when it comes*, i. e. 1. The desolation which the wicked ones make of religion and the religious; though it comes, and seems to be just at the door, yet be not afraid of it, for though God may make use of the wicked as instruments of his peoples correction, yet he will never suffer them to be the authors of their desolation. Or rather, 2. The desolation which wicked men will be brought into in a moment. It will come, and timorous saints may be apprehensive that they shall be involved in it; but let this be their comfort, that though judgments lay waste generally, at least promiscuously, yet God knows who are his, and how to separate between the precious and the vile. Therefore be not afraid of that which appears most formidable, for *ver. 26.* *The Lord shall be* not only thy protector to keep thee safe, but *thy confidence* to keep thee secure, so that thy foot *shall not be taken* by thine enemies, nor ensnared by thine own fears. God has engaged to keep the feet of his saints.

27. ¶ Withhold not good from them, to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.
28. Say not unto thy neighbour, go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee.
29. Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee. 30. ¶ Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm.
31. ¶ Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways. 32. For the froward is abomination to the LORD: but his secret is with the righteous. 33. ¶ The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked: but he blesteth the habitation of the just. 34. ¶ Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly. 35. The wise shall inherit glory, but shame shall be the promotion of fools.

True wisdom consists in the due discharge of our duty towards man, as well as towards God, in honesty, as well as piety, and therefore we have here divers excellent precepts of wisdom, which relate to our neighbour.

1. We must render to all their due, both in justice and charity, and not delay to do it, *ver. 27, 28.* *Withhold not good from them to whom it is due* (either for want of love to them, or thro' too much love to thy money) *when it is in the power of thine hand to do it*, for if it be not it cannot be expected; but it was thy great fault, if thou didst by thy extravagancies disable thy self to do justly, and shew mercy, and it ought to be the greatest of thy grief, if God has disabled thee, not so much that thou art straitned in thine own comforts and conveniencies, as that thou hast not wherewithal to give to those to whom it is due. *Withhold it not*; this implies that it is called for, and expected, but the hand is drawn in, and the bowels of compassion shut up. We must not hinder others from doing it, nor be ourselves backward to it. If thou hast it by thee to day, hast it in the power of thine hand, say not to thy neighbour, *go thy way for this time*, and come at a more convenient season, and I will then see what will be done; *to morrow I will give*; whereas thou art not sure thou shalt live till to morrow, or that to morrow thou shalt have it by thee; be not thus loth to part with thy money upon a good account; make not excuses to shift off a duty that must be done; nor delight to keep thy neighbour in pain, and in suspense; nor to shew the authority which the giver has over the beggar; but readily and cheerfully, and from a principle of conscience towards God, give good to *those to whom it is due*; to the lords and owners of it, so the word is, to those, who upon any account are entitled to it. This requires us (1.) To pay our just debts, without fraud, covin or delay. (2.) To give wages to those that have earned it. (3.) To provide for our relations, and those that have dependence

on us, for to them it is due. (4.) To render dues both to church and state, magistrates and ministers. (5.) To be ready to all acts of friendship and humanity, and in every thing to be neighbourly; for these are things that are due by the law; of doing as we would be done by. (6.) To be charitable to the poor and necessitous; if others want the necessary supports of life; and we have wherewithal to supply them, we must look upon it as due to them, and not withhold it; alms are called righteousness, because they are a debt to the poor; and a debt which we must not defer to pay; *Bis dat, qui cito dat.*

2. We must never design any hurt or harm to any body, *ver. 29.* *Devise not evil against thy neighbour*; do not contrive how to do him an ill turn undiscovered, to prejudice him in his body, goods, or good nature; and the rather because *he dwells securely by thee*, and having given thee no provocation, entertains no jealousy or suspicion of thee, and therefore is off his guard. It is against the laws both of honour and friendship to do a man an ill turn, and give him no warning; *Cursed be he that smiteth his neighbour secretly.* It is a most base ungrateful thing, if our neighbours have a good opinion of us, that we will do them no harm, and we from thence take advantage to cheat and injure them.

3. We must not be quarrelsome and litigious, *ver. 30.* Do not *strive with a man without cause*; contend not for that which thou hast no title to; resent not that as a provocation, which peradventure was but an oversight. Never trouble thy neighbour with frivolous complaints and accusations; or vexatious law-suits, when either there is no harm done thee, or none worth speaking of, or thou mightest right thy self in a friendly way; law must be the last refuge; for it is not only our duty, but our interest as much as in us lies, *to live peaceably with all men.* When accounts are balanced, it will be found there is little got by striving.

4. We must not envy the prosperity of evil-doers; *ver. 31.* This caution is the same with that which is so much insisted on, *Psal. xxxvii.* *Envy not the oppressor*, though he be rich and great, though he live in ease and pleasure, and make all about him to stand in awe of him, yet do not think him a happy man, nor wish thy self in his condition. *Chuse none of his ways*, do not imitate him, nor take the courses he takes to enrich himself. Never think of doing as he doth, though thou wert sure to get by it all that he hath, for it would be dear bought.

Now to shew what little reason saints have to envy sinners, Solomon here in the four last verses of the chapter, compares the condition of sinners and saints together, (as his father David had done, *Psal. xxxvii.*) sets the one over-against the other, that we may see how happy the saints are, though they be *oppressed*, and how miserable the wicked are, though they be *oppressors*. Men are to be judged of as they stand with God, and as he judgeth of them, not as they stand in the world's books; those are in the right that are of God's mind; and if we be of his mind, we shall see whatever pretence one sinner may have to envy another, saints are so happy themselves, that they have no reason at all to envy any sinner, though his condition be never so prosperous. For;

(1.) Sinners are hated of God, but saints are loved, *ver. 32.* The froward sinners, that are continually going from-ward him, whose lives are a perverse contradiction to his will, they are *abomination to the Lord*; he that hateth nothing that he has made, yet abhors those, who have thus married themselves; they are not only abominable in his sight, but an abomination; the righteous therefore have no reason to envy them, for they have his secret with them; they are his favourites, he hath that communion with them which is a secret to the world, and in which they have a joy that a stranger doth not intermeddle with; he communicates to them the secret tokens of his love; his covenant is with them, they know his mind, and the meanings and intentions of his providence better than others can. *Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?*

(2.) Sinners are under the curse of God, they and their houses, saints are under his blessing, they and their habitation; *ver. 33.* The wicked has a house, a strong and stately dwelling, perhaps, but *the curse of the Lord* is upon it, it is *in it*, and though the affairs of the family may prosper, yet the very blessings are cursed, *Mal. ii. 2.* there is *leanness in the soul*, when the body is fed to the full, *Psal. cvi. 15.* The curse may work silently and slowly; but it is as a fretting leprosy, it will consume the *timber thereof* and the *stones thereof*, *Zech. v. 4.* *Hab. ii. 11.* The just have a habitation, a poor cottage, the word is used for sheep-cotes, a very mean dwelling, but God blesteth it, he is continually blessing it from the beginning of the year to the end of it. The curse or blessing of God is upon the house, according as the inhabitants are, wicked or godly; and it is certain, a blessed family though poor, has no reason to envy a cursed family though rich.

(3.) God puts contempt upon sinners, but shews respect unto saints, *ver. 34.* 1. Those that *exalt themselves shall certainly be abased*; surely he scorneth the scorners. Those that scorn to submit to the discipline of religion, scorn to take God's yoke upon them, scorn to be beholden to his grace, that scoff at godliness and godly people, and take a pleasure in bantering and exposing them, God will scorn them, and lay them open to scorn before all the world; he despiseth their impotent malice, *sits in heaven and laughs at them*

them, *Psal. ii. 4.* He retaliates upon them, *Psal. xviii. 26. resists the proud.* 2. Those that *humble themselves shall be exalted*, for he giveth grace to the lowly, he works that in them, which puts honour upon them, and for which they are *accepted of God, and approved of men.* Those that patiently bear contempt from scornful men, shall have respect from God and all good men, and then they have no reason to envy the scorners, or to chuse their ways.

(4.) The end of sinners will be everlasting shame, the end of saints endless honour, *ver. 35.* 1. Saints are wise men, and act wisely for themselves, for though their religion now wraps them up in obscurity, and lays them open to reproach, yet they are sure to inherit glory at last, the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; they shall have it, and have it by inheritance, the sweetest and surest tenure; God gives them grace, *ver. 34.* and therefore they shall inherit glory, for grace is glory, *2 Cor. iii. 18.* it is glory begun, the earnest of it, *Psal. lxxxiv. 11.* 2. Sinners are fools, for they are not only preparing disgrace for themselves, but at the same time flattering themselves with a prospect of honour, as if they only took the way to be great: Their end will manifest their folly, *Shame shall be their promotion:* And it will be so much the more their punishment, that it will come instead of their promotion; it will be all the promotion they must ever expect, that God will be glorified in their everlasting confusion.

C H A P IV.

When the things of God are to be taught, precept must be upon precept, and line upon line, *not only because things themselves are of great worth and weight, but because mens minds at the least are unapt to admit them, and commonly prejudiced against them; and therefore Solomon in this chapter, with a great variety of expression, and a pleasant powerful flood of divine eloquence, inculcates the same things he had expressed upon us in the foregoing chapters.* Here is, (1.) An earnest exhortation to the study of wisdom, that is, of true religion and godliness, borrowed from the good instructions which his father gave him, and enforced with many considerable arguments, *ver. 1.—13.* (2.) A necessary caution against bad company, and all fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, *ver. 14.—19.* (3.) Particular directions for the attaining and preserving of wisdom, and bringing forth the fruits of it, *ver. 20.—27.* So plainly, so pressingly is the case laid before us, that we shall be for ever inexcusable if we perish in our folly.

1. **H**ear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. 2. For I give you good doctrine, forsake you not my law. 3. For I was my fathers son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. 4. He taught me also, and said unto me, let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments and live. 5. Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not, neither decline from the words of my mouth. 6. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. 7. Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. 8. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. 9. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee. 10. Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings: and the years of thy life shall be many. 11. I have taught thee in thee way of wisdom: I have led thee in right paths. 12. When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened, and when thou runnest thou shalt not stumble. 13. Take fast hold of instruction, let her not go; keep her, for she is thy life.

Here is, 1. The invitation which Solomon gives to his children to come and receive instruction from him, *ver. 1, 2.* Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father. That is, (1.) Let my own children in the first place receive and give good heed to those instructions which I set down for the use of others also. Note, Magistrates and ministers that are entrusted with the conduct of larger societies, are concerned to take a more than ordinary care for the good instructions of their own families; from which their publick work will by no means excuse them. This charity must begin at home, though it must not end there; for he that has not his children in subjection with all gravity, and doth not take pains in their good education, how shall he do his duty as he ought to the church of God, *1 Tim. iii. 4, 5.* And the children of those that are eminent for wisdom and publick usefulness, ought to improve in knowledge and grace, in proportion to the advantages they have by their relation to such parents. Yet it may be observed, to save both the credit and the comfort of those parents, whose children do not answer the hopes that arose from their education, that Rehoboam the son of Solomon was far from being either one of the wisest, or one of the best; we have reason to think that

thousands have got more good by Solomon's proverbs than his own son did, to whom they seem to have been dedicated. (2.) Let all young people in the days of their childhood and youth, take pains to get knowledge and grace, for that is their learning age, and then their minds are formed and seasoned. He doth not say, my children, but ye children; we read but of one son that Solomon had of his own, but would you think it? He is willing to set up for a school-master, and to teach other people's children; for in that age there is most hopes of success; the branch is easily bended when it is young and tender. (3.) Let all that would receive instruction come with the disposition of children, though they be grown persons, let all prejudices be laid aside, and the mind be as white paper; let them be dutiful, tractable, and self-diffident; and take the word as the word of a father, which comes both with authority, and with affection. We must see it coming from God as our Father in heaven, to whom we pray, from whom we expect blessings, the Father of our spirits to whom we ought to be in subjection that we may live. We must look upon our teachers as our fathers that love us, and seek our welfare; and therefore though the instruction carry in it reproof and correction, for so the word signifies, yet we must bid it welcome.

Now, (1.) To recommend it to us, we are told, not only that it is the instruction of a father, but that it is understanding, and therefore should be welcome to intelligent creatures; religion hath reason on its side, and we are taught it by fair reasoning. It is a law indeed, *ver. 2.* but that law is founded upon doctrine, upon unquestionable principles of truth, upon good doctrine, which is not only faithful, but worthy of all acceptance. If we admit the doctrine, we cannot but submit to the law.

(2.) To rivet it in us, we are directed to receive it as a gift, to attend to it with all diligence, attend to know it, for otherwise we cannot do it, and not to forsake it, by disowning the doctrine, or disobeying the law.

2. The instructions he gives them. Observe,

(1.) How he came by these instructions; he had them from his parents, and teacheth his children the same that they taught him, *ver. 3, 4.* Observe, 1. His parents loved him, and therefore taught him. *I was my father's son.* David had many sons, but Solomon was his son indeed, as Isaac is called, *Gen. xvii. 19.* And for the same reason, because on him the covenant was entailed. He was his father's darling, above any of his children. Because God had a special kindness for Solomon, (the prophet called him Jedidiah, because the Lord loved him, *2 Sam. xii. 25.*) and for that reason David had a special kindness for him, for he was a man after God's own heart. If parents may ever love one child better than another, it must not be till it plainly appears that God doth so. He was tender, and only beloved in the sight of his mother; sure there was a manifest reason for making such a distinction, when both the parents made it. Now we see how they shewed their love, they catechized him, kept him to his book, and held him to a strict discipline. Though he was a prince, and heir apparent to the crown, yet they did not let him live at large, nay, therefore they tutored him thus. And perhaps David was the more strict with Solomon in his education, because he had seen the ill effects of an undue indulgence in Adonijah, whom he had not crossed in any thing, *1 Kings i. 6.* as also in Absalom. 2. What his parents taught him, he teacheth others. Observe, (1.) When Solomon was grown up, he not only remembered, but took a pleasure in repeating the good lessons his parents taught him when he was a child. He did not forget them, so deep were the impressions they made upon him. He was not ashamed of them, such a high value had he for them, nor did he look upon them as the childish things, the mean things which when he became a man, a king, he should put away, as a disparagement to him; much less did he repeat them, as some wicked children have done, to ridicule them, and make his companions merry with them, priding himself that he was got clear from grave lessons and restraints. (2.) Though Solomon was a wise man himself, and divinely inspired, yet when he was to teach wisdom, he did not think it below him to quote his father, and to make use of his words. They that would learn well, and teach well in religion, must not affect new-found notions, and new-coined phrases, so as to look with contempt upon the knowledge and language of their predecessors; if we must keep to the good old way, why should we scorn the good old words? *Jer. vi. 16.* (3.) Solomon having been well educated by his parents, thought himself thereby obliged to give his children a good education, the same that his parents had given him, and this is one way in which we must requite our parents for the pains they took with us, even by shewing piety at home, *1 Tim. v. 4.* They taught us not only that we may learn our selves, but that we might teach our children the good knowledge of God, *Psal. lxxviii. 6.* And we are false to a trust if we do not; for the sacred depositum of religious doctrine and law was lodged in our hands, with a charge to transmit it pure and entire to those that shall come after us, *2 Tim. ii. 2.* (4.) Solomon enforceth his exhortations, with the authority of his father David, a man famous in his generation upon all accounts: Be it taken notice of to the honour of religion, that the wisest and best men in every age have been most zealous, not only for the practice of it themselves, but the propagating of it to others; and we should therefore

therefore continue in the things which we have learned, knowing of whom we have learned them, 2 Tim. iii. 14.

(2.) What those instructions were, ver. 4.—13.

(1.) By way of precept and exhortation. David in teaching his son, though he was a child of great capacity, and quick apprehension, yet to shew that he was in good earnest, and to affect his child the more with what he said, expressed himself with great warmth and importunity, and inculcated the same thing again and again. So children must be taught, Deut. vi. 7. *Thou shalt whet them diligently upon thy children.* David, though he was a man of publick business, and had tutors for his son, yet took all this pains with him himself.

1. He recommends to him his bible and his catechism, as the means, his father's words, ver. 4. *the words of his mouth*, ver. 5. his sayings, ver. 10. all the good lessons he had taught him; and, perhaps, he means particularly the book of Psalms, many of which were *Maschils*, psalms of instruction, and two of them are expressly said to be for Solomon. These, and all his other words, Solomon must have an eye to. (1.) He must hear and receive them, ver. 10. diligently attend to them and imbibe them, *as the earth drinks in the rain that comes oft upon it*, Heb. vi. 7. God thus bespeaks our attention to his word, *Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings.* (2.) He must hold fast the form of sound words which his father gave him, ver. 4. *Let thine heart retain my words*; and except the word be hid in the heart, lodged in the will and affections it will not be retained. (3.) He must govern himself by them. *Keep my commandments*, i. e. obey them, and that is the way to encrease in the knowledge of them, John vii. 17. (4.) He must stick to them, and abide by them, *decline not from the words of my mouth*, ver. 5. as fearing they will be too great a check upon thee, but *take fast hold of instruction*, ver. 13. as being resolved to keep thy hold and never let it go. Those that have a good education, though they strive to shake it off, will find it hang about them a great while, and if it do not their case is very sad.

2. He recommends to him wisdom and understanding as the end to be aimed at in the use of these means; that wisdom which is the principal wisdom, get that: *Quod caput est sapientiae eam acquire sapientiam.* J. T. i. e. be sure to mind that branch of wisdom which he had said before is the top branch of it, and that is the fear of God, chap. i. 7. A principle of religion in the heart, this is the one thing needful: therefore,

1. Get this wisdom, get this understanding, ver. 5. And again, *Get wisdom*, and *with all thy getting, get understanding*, ver. 7. pray for it, take pains for it, give diligence in the use of all appointed means to attain it, *wait at wisdom's gate*, Prov. viii. 34. Get dominion over thy corruptions, which are thy follies, get possession of wise principles, and the habits of wisdom: get it by experience, get it *above all thy getting*, be more in care, and take more pains to get this than to get the wealth of this world; whatever thou forgettest, get this; reckon it a great achievement, and pursue it accordingly. True wisdom is God's gift, and yet we are here commanded to get it, because God gives it to those that labour for it: yet, after all, we must not say, *Our might, and the power of our hand has gotten us this wealth.*

2. Forget her not, ver. 5. forsake her not, ver. 6. let her not go, ver. 13. but keep her. Those that have got this wisdom must take heed of losing it again, by returning to folly: it is indeed a good part that shall not be taken from us, but then we must take heed lest we throw it from us, as those do that forget it first, and let it slip out of their minds, and then forsake it and turn out of its good ways. That good thing that is committed to us we must keep, and not let it drop through carelessness, nor suffer it to be forced from us, or suffer ourselves to be wheedled out of it; never let go such a jewel.

3. Love her, ver. 6. and embrace her, ver. 8. as worldly men love their wealth, and set their hearts upon it. Religion should be very dear to us, dearer than any thing in this world: and if we cannot reach to be great masters of wisdom, yet let us be true lovers of it, and what grace we have let us embrace it with a sincere affection, as those that admire its beauty.

4. Exalt her, ver. 8. always keep up high thoughts of religion, speak of it with value and veneration, and do all thou canst to bring it into reputation and maintain the credit of it among men, concur with God in his purpose, which is to magnify the law and make it honourable, and do what thou canst to serve that purpose. Let wisdom's children not only justify her, but magnify her, and prefer her before that which is dearest to them in this world. In honouring those that fear the Lord, though they are low in the world, and regarding a poor wise man we exalt wisdom.

(2.) By way of motive and inducement, thus to labour for wisdom, and submit to the conduct of it, consider,

1. It is the main matter, and that which ought to be the chief and continual care of every man in this life, ver. 7. *Wisdom is the principal thing*; other things which we are solicitous to get and keep are nothing to it: It is the whole of man, Eccles. xii. 13. It is that which recommends us to God, which beautifies the soul, which enables us to answer the end of our creation, to live to some good purpose in the world, and to get to heaven at last; and therefore it is the principal thing.

It hath reason and equity on its side, ver. 11. *I have taught thee in the way of wisdom*, true wisdom; and so it will be found to be at last; *I have led thee*, not in the crooked ways of carnal policy, which doth wrong under colour of wisdom, but in right paths, agreeable to the eternal rules and reasons of good and evil. The rectitude of the divine nature appears in the rectitude of all the divine laws. Observe, David not only taught his son by good instructions, but led him both by a good example, and by applying general instructions to particular cases, so that nothing was wanting on his part to make him wise.

3. It would be much for his own advantage: If thou be wise and good, thou shalt be so for thy self.

(1.) It will be thy life, thy comfort, thy happiness, it is what thou canst not live without. *Keep my commandments and live*, ver. 4. That of our Saviour agrees with this, *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*, Matt. ix. 17. It is upon pain of death, eternal death, and in prospect of life, eternal life, that we are required to be religious: Receive wisdom's sayings, and the years of thy life shall be many, ver. 10. as many in this world as infinite wisdom sees fit, and in the other world thou shalt live that life, the years of which shall never be numbred. Keep her therefore whatever it cost thee, for she is thy life, ver. 13. All thy satisfaction will be found in this; and a soul without true wisdom and grace is really a dead soul.

(2.) It will be thy guard and guide, thy convoy and conduct, through all the dangers and difficulties of thy journey through this wilderness. Love wisdom, and cleave to her, and she shall preserve thee, she shall keep thee, ver. 6. from sin the worst of evils, the worst of enemies; shall keep thee from hurting thy self, and then none else can hurt thee. As we say, Keep thy shop, and thy shop will keep thee; so keep thy wisdom, and thy wisdom will keep thee. It will keep us from streights and stumbling blocks in the management of our selves, and our affairs, ver. 12. 1. That our steps be not streightened when we go, i. e. bring ourselves into such streights as David was in, 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. They that make God's word their rule, shall walk at liberty, and be at ease in themselves. 2. That our feet do not stumble when we run. Wise and good men, if they be put upon sudden resolves, the certain rule of God's word which they go by, will keep them even then from stumbling upon any thing that may be pernicious. Integrity and uprightness will preserve us.

(3.) It will be thy honour and reputation, ver. 8. Exalt wisdom, do thou but shew thy good will to her advancement, and though she needs not thy service, she will abundantly recompence it, she shall promote thee, she shall bring thee to honour. Solomon was to be a king, but his wisdom and virtue would be more his honour, than his crown or purple; that was it for which all his neighbours had him so much in veneration; and, no doubt, in his reign and David's, wise and good men stood fairest for preferment. However, religion will first or last bring all those to honour that cordially embrace her; they shall be accepted of God, respected by all wise men, owned in the great day, and shall inherit everlasting glory. This he insists on, ver. 9. *She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace* in this world, shall recommend thee both to God and man, and in the other world a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee; a crown that shall never totter, a crown of glory that shall never wither. That is the true honour which attends religion; *Nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus.* David having thus recommended wisdom to his son, no marvel that when God bid him ask what he would, he prayed, Lord, give me a wife and an understanding heart. We should make it appear by our prayers how well we were taught.

14. Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. 15. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. 16. For they sleep not except they have done mischief: and their sleep is taken away unless they cause some to fall. 17. For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence. 18. But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. 19. The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.

Some make David's instructions to Solomon, which began ver. 4. to continue to the end of the chapter; nay, some continue them to the end of the ninth chapter; but it is more probable that Solomon begins here again, if not sooner. In these verses, having exhorted us to walk in the paths of wisdom, he cautions us against the path of the wicked. 1. We must take heed of the ways of sin, and avoid them; every thing that looks like sin, and leads to it. 2. In order to this, we must keep out of the ways of sinners, and have no fellowship with them. For fear of falling into wicked courses, we must shun wicked company.

Here is, (1.) The caution itself, ver. 14, 15.

1. We must take heed of falling in with sin and sinners. Enter not into the paths of the wicked. Our teacher having like a faithful guide shewed us the right paths, ver. 11. here warns us of the by-paths

by-paths into which we are in danger of being drawn aside. Those that have been well educated, and trained up in the way they should go, let them never turn aside into the way they should not go; do not so much as enter into it; no not to make trial of it, lest it prove a dangerous experiment, and difficult to retreat with safety. Venture not into the company of those that are infected with the plague, no not though thou think thy self guarded with an antidote.

2. If at any time we are inveigled into an evil way, we must hasten out of it. If ere thou wast aware thou didst enter in at the gate, because it was wide, yet *go not on in the way of evil men*. As soon as thou art made sensible of thy mistake, retire immediately, take not a step more, stay not a minute longer in the way that certainly leads to destruction.

3. We must dread and detest the ways of sin and sinners, and decline them with the utmost care imaginable. *The way of evil men* may seem a pleasant way and sociable, and the next way to the compassing of some secular end we may have in view, but it is an ill way, and will end ill, and therefore if thou love thy God and thy soul, *avoid it, pass not by it*, that thou mayest not be tempted to enter into it; and if thou find thy self near it, *turn from it, and pass away*, and get as far off it as thou canst. The manner of expression intimates the imminent danger we are in, the need we have of this caution, and the great importance of it; and that our watchmen are or should be in good earnest in giving us warning. It intimates likewise, at what a distance we should keep from sin and sinners; he doth not say, keep at a due distance, but at a great distance, the further the better; never think you can get far enough from it; *escape for thy life, look not behind thee*.

(2.) The reasons to enforce this caution.

1. Consider the character of the men whose way thou art warned to shun; they are mischievous men, *ver. 16, 17*. they not only care not what hurt they do to those that stand in their way, but it is their business to do mischief, and their delight, purely for mischief sake. They are continually designing and endeavouring to *cause some to fall*, to ruin them body and soul. Wickedness and malice are in their nature, and violence in all their actions: They are spiteful in the highest degree; for, 1. Mischief is rest and sleep to them. As much satisfaction as a covetous man has when he has got money, an ambitious man when he has got preferment, and a good man when he has done good, so much have they when they have said or done that which is injurious and ill-natured; and extremely uneasy if they cannot get their envy and revenge gratified; as Haman, to whom every thing was unpleasant, as long as Mordecai was unchanged. It intimates likewise, how restless and unwearied they are in their mischievous pursuits; they will rather want sleep than want the pleasure of being vexatious. 2. Mischief is meat and drink to them, they feed and feast upon it; *they eat the bread of wickedness, (they eat up my people as they eat bread, Psalm xiv. 4.) and drink the wine of violence; drink iniquity like water, Job xv. 16*. All they eat and drink is got by rapine and oppression. Do wicked men think the time lost in which they are not doing hurt? Let good men make it as much their business and delight to do good; *Amici, diem perdidit*; and let all that are wise, and wish well to themselves, avoid the society of such; for, (1.) It is very scandalous; for there is no disposition of mind that is a greater reproach to the human nature, a greater enemy to human society, a bolder defiance to God and conscience, that has more of the devil's image in it, nor is more serviceable to his interests, than a delight to do mischief, and to vex, and hurt, and ruin every body. (2.) It is very dangerous. Shun those that delight to do mischief as thou tenderest thine own safety; for whatever friendship they may pretend, one time or other they will do thee mischief; thou wilt ruin thyself if thou dost concur with them, *chap. i. 18*. and they will ruin thee if thou dost not.

2. Consider the character of the way itself which thou art warned to shun, compared with the right way which thou art invited to walk in.

(1.) The way of righteousness is light, *ver. 18*. *The path of the just*, which they have chosen, and in which they walk, *is as light*; the *light shines on their ways*, *Job xxii. 28*. and makes them both safe and pleasant. Christ is *their way*, and he is *the light*. They are guided by the word of God, and that is *a light to their feet*; they themselves are *light in the Lord*, and they *walk in the light as he is in the light*. 1. It is a *shining light*: Their way shines to themselves in the joy and comfort of it, it shines before others in the lustre and honour of it; *shines before men, who see their good works*, *Matt. v. 16*. They go on in their way with a holy security and serenity of mind, as those that *walk in the light*. It is as the morning light, which *shines out of obscurity*, *Isa. lviii. 8, 10*. and puts an end to the *works of darkness*. 2. It is a growing light; it *shines more and more*; not like the light of a meteor, which soon disappears, or that of a candle, which burns dim, and burns down; but like that of the rising sun, which goes forward shining, mounts upward shining: Grace the guide of this way is growing; he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger; that joy which is the pleasure of this way, that honour which is the brightness of it, and all that happiness which is indeed its light, shall be still increasing. 3. It will arrive in the end at *the perfect day*. The light of the day-spring will at length be noon-day light,

and that is it which the enlightned soul is pressing towards. The saints will not be perfect till they come to heaven, but there they shall themselves *shine as the sun when he goes forth in his strength*, *Matt. xiii. 43*. Their graces and joys shall be all consummate. Therefore it is our wisdom to keep close to *the path of the just*.

(2.) *The way of sin is as darkness*, *ver. 19*. The works he had cautioned us not to have fellowship with, are *works of darkness*. What true pleasure and satisfaction can they have, who know no pleasure and satisfaction but what they have in doing mischief? What sure guide have they that cast God's word behind them? *The way of the wicked is dark*, and therefore dangerous; for they stumble, and yet *know not at what they stumble*; they fall into sin, but are not aware which way the temptation came, by which they were overthrown, and therefore know not how to avoid it the next time. They fall into trouble, but never enquire wherefore God contends with them; they *consider not that they do evil*, nor what will be in the end of it, *Psalms lxxxii. 5. Job xviii. 5, 6*. This is the way we are bid to shun.

20. ¶ My son, attend to my words, incline thine ear unto my sayings. 21. Let not them depart from thine eyes: keep them in the midst of thine heart. 22. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh. 23. ¶ Keep thy heart with all diligence: for out of it are the issues of life. 24. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. 25. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eye-lids look straight before thee. 26. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. 27. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

Solomon having warned us not to do evil, here teacheth us how to do well: It is not enough for us to shun the occasions of sin, but we must study the methods of duty.

1. We must have a continual regard to the word of God, and endeavour that it may be always ready to us. The sayings of wisdom must be our principles by which we must govern ourselves, our monitors to warn us of duty and danger; and therefore, 1. We must receive them readily; *incline thine ear to them*, *ver. 20*. humbly bow to them, diligently listen to them. The attentive hearing of the word of God, is a good sign of a work of grace begun in the heart, and a good means of carrying it on. It is to be hoped those are resolved to do their duty, that are inclined to know it. 2. We must retain them carefully, *ver. 21*. we must lay them before us as our rule; *Let them not depart from thine eyes*; view them, review them, and in every thing aim to conform to them. We must lodge them within us, as a commanding principle, the influences of which are diffused throughout the whole man; *keep them in the midst of thine heart*, as things dear to thee, and which thou art afraid of losing; let the word of God be written in the heart, and that which is written there will remain.

And the reason why we must thus make much of the words of wisdom, is because they will be both food and physick to us, like *the tree of life*, *Rev. xxii. 2. Ezek. xlvii. 12*. They that seek and find them, find and keep them, shall find in them, 1. Food; *For they are life unto those that find them*, *ver. 22*. As the spiritual life was begun by the Word as the instrument of it, so by the same word it is still nourished and maintained; we could not live without it, we may by faith live upon it. 2. Physick. They are *health to all their flesh*, i. e. to the whole man, both body and soul; they help to keep both in good plight. They are *health to all flesh*, so the Seventy. There is enough to cure all the diseases of this distempered world. They are *a medicine to all their flesh*, so the word is; i. e. to all their corruptions; for they are called flesh; to all their grievances, which are as thorns in the flesh: There is in the word of God a proper remedy for all our spiritual maladies.

2. We must keep a watchful eye, and a strict hand, upon all the motions of our inward man, *ver. 23*. Here is, 1. A great duty required by the laws of wisdom, and in order to our getting and preserving wisdom; *Keep thy heart with all diligence*. God that gave us these souls, gave us a strict charge with them; man, woman, *keep thy heart*; *take heed to thy spirit*, *Deut. iv. 9*. We must maintain a holy jealousy of ourselves, and set a strict guard accordingly upon all the avenues of the soul; keep our hearts from doing hurt, and getting hurt; from being defiled by sin, and disturbed by trouble; keep them as our jewel, as our vineyard; keep conscience void of offence: Keep out bad thoughts; keep up good thoughts; keep the affections upon right objects, and in due bounds. *Keep them with all keepings*, so the word is; there are many ways of keeping things, by care, by strength, by calling in help, and we must use them all in keeping our hearts; and all little enough, so deceitful are they, *Jer. xvii. 9*. Or, *above all keepings*; we must keep our hearts with more care and diligence, than we keep any thing else. We must keep our eyes, *John iii. 1*. keep our tongues, *Psalms xxxiv. 13*. keep our feet, *Ecclesi. v. 1*. but above all keep our hearts. 2. A good reason given for this care;

care; because *out of it are the issues of life*, i. e. out of a heart well kept, will flow living issues, good products to the glory of God, and the edification of others. Or, in general, all the actions of the life flow from the heart, and therefore keeping that is making the tree good and healing the springs. Our lives will be regular or irregular, comfortable or uncomfortable, according as our hearts are kept or neglected.

3. We must set a *watch before the door of our lips* that we offend not with our tongue, *ver. 24. put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips*. Our hearts being naturally corrupt, out of them a great deal of corrupt communication is apt to come, and therefore we must conceive a great dread and detestation of all manner of evil words, cursing, swearing, lying, slandering, brawling, filthiness and foolish talking, all which come from a *froward mouth, and perverse lips*, that will not be governed either by reason or religion, but contradict both; and which are as unsightly and ill-favoured before God, as a crooked distorted mouth drawn awry is before men. All manner of tongue-sins we must, by constant watchfulness and steadfast resolution *put from us; put far from us*; abstaining from all words that have an appearance of evil, and fearing to learn any such words.

4. We must make a covenant with our eyes; let them *look right on*, and *straight before thee*, *ver. 25.* let the eye be fixed and not wandering, let it not rove after every thing that presents itself, for then it will be diverted from good, and ensnared in evil. Turn it from beholding vanity; let thine eye be single and not divided; let thine intentions be sincere and uniform, and look not a-squint at any by-end. We must keep our eye upon our Master, and be careful to approve ourselves to him; keep our eye upon our rule, and conform to that; keep our eye upon our mark, the *prize of the high calling*, and direct all towards that. *Oculum in metam.*

5. We must act considerately in all we do, *ver. 26. ponder the paths of thy feet: weigh it*, so the word is: put the word of God in one scale, and what thou hast done, or art about to do, in the other, and see how they agree; be nice and critical in examining whether thy way be good before the Lord, and whether it will end well. We must consider our past ways, and examine what we have done, and our present ways, What are we doing? Whither are we going? *See that ye walk circumspectly.* It concerns us to consider, what are the duties and what the difficulties, what are the advantages, and what the dangers of our way, that we may act accordingly. Do nothing rashly.

6. We must act with steadiness, and caution, and consistency. *Let all thy ways be established*, *ver. 6.* and be not unstable in them, as the double-minded man is; halt not between two, but go on in an even uniform course of obedience; *turn not to the right hand, nor to the left*, for there are errors on both hands, and Satan gains his point, if he prevail to draw us aside either way. Be very careful to *remove thy foot from evil*, i. e. take heed of extremes, for in them there is evil, and *let thine eyes look right on*, that thou mayest keep the golden mean. Those that would approve themselves wise must always be watchful.

C H A P. V.

The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of chap. ii. To write the same things in other words ought not to be grievous, for it is safe, Phil. iii. 1: Here is (1.) An exhortation to get acquaintance with, and submit to the laws of wisdom in general, ver. 1, 2. (2.) A particular caution against the sin of whoredom, ver. 3,—14. (3.) Remedies prescribed against that sin. 1. Conjugal love, ver. 15,—20. 2. A regard to God's omniscience, ver. 21. 3. A dread of the miserable end of wicked people, ver. 22, 23. And all little enough to arm young people against those fleshly lusts which war against the soul.

1. **M**Y son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding. 2. That thou mayest regard discretion, and *that thy lips may keep knowledge.* 3. ¶ For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honey-comb, and her mouth is smoother than oil. 4. But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. 5. Her feet go down to death: her steps take hold on hell. 6. Left thou shouldst ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable, *that thou canst not know them.* 7. Hear me now therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth. 8. Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house: 9. Left thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel. 10. Left strangers be filled with thy wealth, and thy labour be in the house of a stranger, 11. And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, 12. And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof? 13. And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me? 14. I was almost in all evil, in the midst of the congregation and assembly.

No. XLIX.

Here we have;

1. A solemn preface to introduce the caution which follows, *ver. 1, 2.* Solomon here addresseth himself to his son, that is, to all young men, as unto his children, whom he has an affection for, and some influence upon. In God's name he demands attention, for he writes by divine inspiration, and is a prophet, though he begins not with, *Thus saith the Lord. Attend, and bow thine ear*; not only hear what is said, and read what is written, but apply thy mind to it, and consider it diligently. To gain attention he urgeth, 1. The excellency of his discourse; it is *my wisdom*, it is *my understanding*; if I undertake to teach thee wisdom, I cannot prescribe any thing to be more properly called so: moral philosophy is my philosophy, and that which is to be learned in my school. 2. The usefulness of it: attend to what I say, (1.) That thou mayest act wisely; *that thou mayest regard discretion*: Solomon's lectures are not designed to fill our heads with notions, with matters of nice speculation, or doubtful disputation, but to guide us in the government of ourselves, that we may act prudently, so as becomes us, and so as will be for our true interest. (2.) That thou mayest speak wisely; *that thy lips may keep knowledge*, and thou mayest have it ready at thy tongue's end (as we say) for the benefit of those with whom thou dost converse. The priest's lips are said to *keep knowledge*, Mal. ii. 7. but they that are ready and mighty in the scriptures, may not only in their devotions, but in their discourses, be spiritual priests.

2. The caution itself, and that is to abstain from fleshly lusts, from adultery, fornication, and all uncleanness. Some apply this figuratively, and by the adulterous woman here understand idolatry, false doctrine, which tends to debauch mens minds and manners; or, the sensual appetite, to which it may as fitly as any thing be applied; but the primary scope of it is plainly to warn us against seventh commandment sins, which youth is so prone to; temptations to which are so violent, examples of which are so many, and which, where admitted, are so destructive to all the seeds of virtue in the soul, that it is not strange Solomon's cautions against it are so very pressing, and so oft repeated.

Solomon here as a faithful watchman gives fair warning to all, as they tender their lives and comforts, to dread this sin, for it will certainly be their ruin. Two things we are here warned to take heed of,

1. That we do not listen to the charms of this sin. It is true, *the lips of a strange woman drop as a honey-comb*, *ver. 3.* the pleasures of fleshly lusts are very tempting, like the wine that *gives its colour in the cup*, and *moves itself aright*, its mouth, the kisses of its mouth, the words of its mouth are *smoother than oil*, that the poisonous pill may go down glib, and there may be no suspicion of harm in it.

But consider, (1.) How fatal the consequences will be: What fruit will the sinner have of his honey and oil, when the end will be, 1. The terrors of conscience, it is *bitter as wormwood*, *ver. 4:* what was luscious in the mouth, rises in the stomach, and fours there; it cuts in the reflection like a *two-edged sword*; take it which way you will it wounds: Solomon could speak by experience, *Ecc. vii. 26.* 2. The torments of hell. If some that have been guilty of this sin have repented and been saved, yet the direct tendency of the sin is to destruction of body and soul; the feet of it *go down to death*, nay, they *take hold on hell*, to pull it to the sinner, as if the damnation flumbled too long, *ver. 5.* Those that are entangled in this sin there is but a step between them and hell, and they are ready to drop into it.

(2.) Consider how false the charms are. The adulteress flatters and speaks fair, her words are honey and oil, but she will deceive those that hearken to her, *her ways are moveable that thou canst not know them*, she often changeth her disguise, and puts on a great variety of false colours, because if she be rightly known, she is certainly hated. Proteus-like she puts on many shapes, that she may keep in with those whom she has a design upon: And what doth she aim at with all this art and management? nothing but to keep them from *pondering the path of life*, for she knows if they once come to do that, she shall certainly lose them. Those are *ignorant of Satan's devices*, who do not understand, that the great thing he drives at in all his temptations, is, 1. To keep them from choosing the *path of life*, to prevent them from being religious, and from going to heaven, that being himself shut out from happiness, he may keep them out from it. 2. In order hereunto to keep them from *pondering the path of life*, from considering how reasonable it is that they should walk in that path, and how much it will be for their advantage. Be it observed to the honour of religion, that it certainly gains its point with all those that will but allow themselves the liberty of a serious thought, and will weigh things impartially in an even balance; and that the devil has no way of securing men in his interests, but by diverting them with continual amusements of one kind or other from the calm and sober consideration of the *things that belong to their peace*. And uncleanness is a sin that doth as much as any thing blind the understanding, fear the conscience, and keep people from *pondering the path of life*. Whoredom takes away the heart, *Hos. iv. 11.*

2. That we do not approach the borders of this sin, *ver. 7, 8.* This caution is introduced with a solemn preface, *Hear me now therefore, O ye children*, whoever you are that read or hear these

lines, take notice of what I say, and mix faith with it, treasure it up, and *depart not from the words of my mouth*, as those will do that hearken to the words of the *strange woman*. Do not only receive what I say for the present, but cleave to it, and let it be ready to thee, and of force with thee when thou art most violently assaulted by the temptation. The caution itself is very pressing, *remove thy way far from her*: if thy way should happen to lie near her, and thou shouldst have a fair pretence of being led by business within the reach of her charms, yet change thy way and alter the course of it, rather than expose thyself to danger; *come not nigh the door of her house*; go on the other side of the street, nay, go through some other street, though it be about. This intimates, (1.) That we ought to have a very great dread and detestation of the sin: we must fear it as we would a place infected with the plague, we must loath it as stinking carrion, that we will not come within the smell of. Then we are likely to preserve our purity, when we conceive a rooted antipathy to all fleshly lusts. (2.) That we ought industriously to avoid every thing that may be an occasion of this sin, or a step towards it. They that would be kept from harm must keep out of harm's way. Such tinder there is in the corrupt nature, that it is madness, upon any pretence whatsoever, to come near the sparks. If we thrust ourselves into temptation, we mocked God when we prayed, *Lead us not into temptation*. (3.) That we ought to be jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy, and not to be so confident of the strength of our own resolutions, as to venture upon the brink of sin, with a promise to ourselves, that *hitherto we will come and no further*. (4.) That whatever is become a snare to us, and an occasion of sin, though it be as a *right eye* and a *right hand* we must *pluck it out, cut it off, and cast it from us*, must part with that which is dearest to us, rather than hazard our own souls; this is our Saviour's command, *Matth. v. 28, 29, 30*.

The arguments which Solomon here useth to enforce this caution, are taken from the same topick with those before, the many mischiefs which attend this sin.

(1.) It blasts the reputation; thou wilt *give thine honour unto others*, ver. 9. *i. e.* thou wilt lose it thyself, thou wilt put into the hand of each of thy neighbours a stone to throw at thee, for they will all, with good reason, cry shame on thee, will despise thee, and trample on thee as a foolish man. Whoredom is a sin that makes men contemptible and base, and no man of sense or virtue will care to keep company with one that keeps company with harlots.

(2.) It wastes the time, gives *the years*, the years of youth, the flower of mens time unto *the cruel*, that base lust of thine, which, with the utmost cruelty wars against the soul; that base harlot that pretends an affection for thee, but really hunts for the precious life. Those years that should be given to the honour of a gracious God, are spent in the service of a cruel sin.

(3.) It ruins the estate, ver. 10. *Strangers will be filled with thy wealth*, which thou art but intrusted with as a steward for thy family, and the fruit of *thy labours* which should be provision for thine own house, will be in *the house of a stranger*, that neither has right to it, nor will ever thank thee for it.

(4.) It is destructive to the health, and shortens mens days; *thy flesh and thy body will be consumed by it*, ver. 11. The lusts of uncleanness not only *war against the soul*, which the sinner neglects, and is in no care about; but they war against the body too, which he is so indulgent of, and is in such care to please and pamper; such deceitful, such foolish, such hurtful lusts are they. Those that give themselves to work uncleanness with greediness, waste their strength, throw themselves into weakness, and many times have their bodies filled with loathsome distempers, by which the number of their months are cut off in the midst, and they fall unpitied sacrifices to a cruel lust.

(5.) It will fill the mind with horror, if ever conscience be awakened. Though thou art merry now, *sporting thyself in thine own deceivings*, yet thou wilt certainly *mourn at the last*, ver. 11. Thou art all this while making work for repentance, and laying up matter for vexation and torment in the reflection, when the sin is set before thee in its own colours; sooner or later it will have sorrow; either when the soul is humbled and brought to repentance, or when the *flesh and body is consumed*; either by sickness, when conscience flies in the sinner's face, or by the grave, when the body is rotting there, the soul is racking in the torments of hell, where the worm dies not, and, *son remember*, is the constant peal.

Solomon here brings in the convinced sinner reproaching himself, and aggravating his own folly. He will then most bitterly lament it.

1. That because he hated to be reformed, he therefore hated to be informed, and could not endure either to be taught his duty; *How have I hated* not only the discipline of being instructed, but the instruction it self, though all true and good; or to be told of his faults, *my heart despised reproof*, ver. 12. He cannot but own, that those who had the charge of him, parents, ministers, had done their part, they had been his teachers, they had instructed him, had given him good counsel, and fair warning, ver. 13. but to his own shame and confusion doth he speak it, and therein justifies God in all the miseries that were brought upon him, he had not taken their counsel, had not *obeyed their voice*, for in-

deed he never inclined his ear to those that instructed him; never minded what they said, nor admitted the impressions of it. Note, Those that have had a good education, and do not live up to it, will have a great deal to answer for another day. And those who will not now remember what they were taught to conform themselves to it, will be made to remember it as an aggravation of their sin, and consequently of their ruin.

2. That by the frequent acts of sin, the habits of it were so rooted and confirmed, that his heart was fully set in him to commit it, ver. 14. *I was almost in all evil, in the midst of the congregation and assembly*. When he came into the synagogue, or into the courts of the temple, to worship God with other Israelites; his unclean heart was full of wanton thoughts and desires; and his eyes of adultery. The reverence of the place and company, and work that was a doing could not restrain him, but he was almost as wicked and vile there as any where. No sin will appear more frightful to an awakened conscience, than the profanation of holy things; nor will any aggravation of sin render it more exceeding sinful than the place we are honoured with, in the congregation and assembly, and the advantages we enjoy thereby; Zimri and Cozbi avowed their villainy *in the sight of Moses, and all the congregation*, Numb. xxv. 7. and heart adultery is as open to God, and must needs be most offensive to him; when we draw nigh to him in religious exercises. *I was in all evil*, in defiance of the magistrates and judges and their assemblies; so some understand it. Others refer it to the evil of punishment, not to the evil of sin, I was made an example, a spectacle to the world; I was under almost all God's fore judgments *in the midst of the congregation of Israel*, set up for a mark. *I stood up and cried in the congregation*, Job xxx. 28. Let that be avoided which will be thus rued at last.

15. ¶ Drink waters out of thine own cistern; and running waters out of thine own well. 16. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets. 17. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers with thee. 18. Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoyce with the wife of thy youth. 19. Let her be as the loving hind, and pleasant roe, let her breasts satisfy thee at all times, and be thou ravished always with her love. 20. And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? 21. For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings. 22. ¶ His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins. 23. He shall die without instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

Solomon having shewed the great evil that there is in adultery and fornication, and all such lewd and filthy courses, here prescribes remedies against them.

1. Enjoy with satisfaction the comforts of lawful marriage, which was ordained for the prevention of uncleanness, and therefore ought to be made use of in time, lest it should not prove effectual for the cure of that which it might have prevented. Let none complain that God has dealt unkindly with them, in forbidding them those pleasures, which they have a natural desire of, for he has graciously provided for the regular gratification of them. Thou mayest not indeed eat of every tree of the garden, but chuse thee out one, which thou pleatest, and of that thou mayest freely eat; nature will be content with that, but lust with nothing. And God in thus confining men to one, has been so far from putting any hardship upon them, that he hath really consulted their true interest; for as Mr. Herbert observes,

If God had laid all common, certainly

Man would have been the encloser — church-porch.

Solomon here enlargeth much upon this; not only prescribing it as an antidote, but urging it as an argument against fornication, that the allowed pleasures of marriage (however wicked wits may ridicule them, who are factors for the unclean spirit) far transcend all the false forbidden pleasures of whoredom.

(1.) Let young men marry, marry and not burn. Have a cistern, a well of thine own, ver. 15. even the wife of thy youth, ver. 18. *wholly abstain, or wed*—Herb. The world is wide, and there are varieties of accomplishments, among which thou mayest please thy self.

(2.) Let him that is married take delight in his wife, and let him be very fond of her, not only because she is the wife that he himself hath chosen, and he ought to be pleased with his own choice, but because she is the wife that God in his providence appointed for him, and he ought much more to be pleased with the divine appointment, pleased with her because she is his own: *Let thy fountain be blessed*, ver. 18. *i. e.* think thy self very happy in her; look upon her as a blessed wife, let her have thy blessing, *i. e.* pray daily for her; and then *rejoice with her*. Those comforts we are likely to have joy of, that are sanctified to us by prayer, and the blessing of God. It is not only allowed us, but commanded

manded us to be pleasant with our relations; and it particularly becomes yoke-fellows to rejoice together, and in each other. Mutual delight is the bond of mutual fidelity. It is not only taken for granted, that *the bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride*, Isa. lxii. 5. but given for law, Eccl. ix. 9. *Live joyfully with thy wife whom thou lovest all the days of thy life.* Those take not their comforts there where God has appointed, who are jovial and merry with their companions abroad; but sour and morose with their families at home.

(3.) Let him be fond of his wife, and love her dearly, ver. 19. *Let her be as the loving hind, and pleasant roe*, such as great men sometimes kept tame in their houses, and played with. Desire no better diversion from severe study and business, than the innocent and pleasant conversation of thine own wife; let her lie in thy bosom, as the poor man's ewe lamb did in his, 2 Sam. xii. 3. and do thou repose thy head in her's, and let that *satisfy thee at all times*; and seek not for pleasure in any other. *Err thou always in her love*: If thou wilt suffer thy love to run into an excess, and wilt be doting fond of any body, let it be only of thine own wife, where there is least danger of exceeding. This is *drinking waters*, to quench the thirst of thine appetite, *out of thine own cistern*, and *running waters*, which are clear and sweet, and wholesome, *out of thine own well*, ver. 15. 1 Cor. vii. 2, 3.

(4.) Let him take delight in his children, and look upon them with pleasure, ver. 16, 17. Look upon them as streams from thine own pure fountains (the Jews are said to *come forth out of the waters of Judah*, Isa. xlviii. 1.) so that they are pieces of thy self, as the streams are of the fountain. Keep to thine own wife, and thou shalt have, 1. A numerous off-spring, like *rivers of water* which run in abundance, and they shall be dispersed abroad, matched into other families, whereas they that *commit whoredom shall not increase*, Hos. iv. 10. 2. A peculiar off-spring, which shall be *only thine own*, whereas the children of whoredom that are fathered upon thee, it is likely are not so, but for ought thou knowest, are the off-spring of strangers, and yet thou must keep them. 3. A creditable off-spring, which are an honour to thee, and which thou mayest send abroad and appear with in the streets, whereas a spurious brood is thy disgrace, and that which thou art ashamed to own. In this matter virtue has all the pleasure and honour in it, justly therefore is it called wisdom.

(5.) Let him then scorn the offer of forbidden pleasures, when he is *always ravished with the love* of a faithful virtuous wife, let him consider what an absurdity it will be for him to be *ravished with a strange woman*, (ver. 20.) to be in love with a filthy harlot, and *embrace the bosom of a stranger*, which if he had any sense of honour or virtue, he would loath the thoughts of. Why wilt thou be so sottish, such an enemy to thy self, as to prefer nasty puddle-water, and that poisoned too; and stolen, before pure living waters out of thine own well? Note, If the dictates of reason may be heard, the laws of virtue will be obeyed.

2. See the eye of God always upon thee, and let his fear rule in thine heart, ver. 21. They that live in this sin promise themselves secrecy; *the eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight*, Job xxiv. 15. But to what purpose, when it cannot be hid from God, for, 1. He sees it, *the ways of man*, all his motions, all his actions are *before the eyes of the Lord*, all the workings of the heart, and all the out goings of the life, that which is done never so secretly, and disguised never so artfully; God sees it in a true light, and knows it with all its causes, circumstances, and consequences. He doth not cast an eye upon mens ways now and then, but they are always actually in his view, and under his inspection; and darest thou sin against God in his sight, and do that wickedness under his eye, which thou durst not do in the presence of a man like thy self? 2. He will call the sinner to an account for it; for he not only sees, but *ponders all his goings*, judgeth concerning them, as one that will shortly judge the sinner for them. Every action is *weighed*, and shall be *brought into judgment*, Eccl. xii. 14. which is a good reason why we should *ponder the path of our feet*, chap. iv. 26. and so *judge our selves* that we may not be judged.

3. Foresee the certain ruin of those that go on still in their trespasses. They that live in this sin promise themselves impunity, but they deceive themselves, their sin will find them out, ver. 22, 23. The apostle gives the sense of these verses in a few words, Heb. xiii. 4. *Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*

(1.) It is a sin which men hardly shake off the power of; when the sinner is old and weak, his lusts are strong and active, in *calling to remembrance the days of his youth*, Ezek. xxiii. 19. Thus *his own iniquities* having seized the *wicked himself* by his own consent, and he having voluntarily surrendered himself a captive to them, he is *held in the cords of his own sins*, and such full possession they have gained of him, that he cannot extricate himself, but in the *greatness of his folly* (and what greater folly could there be, than to yield himself a servant to such cruel task-masters?) he shall *go astray*, and wander endlessly. Uncleanliness is a sin, which when once men have plunged themselves into, they very hardly, and very rarely recover themselves.

(2.) It is a sin, which if it be not forsaken, men cannot possibly escape the punishment of; it will unavoidably be their ruin. As their own iniquities do arrest them in the reproaches of consci-

ence, and present rebukes, Jer. vii. 19. so their own iniquities shall arrest them, and bind them over to the judgments of God; there needs no prison, no chains, they shall be *holden in the cords of their own sins*, as the fallen angels being incurably wicked, are thereby *reserved in chains of darkness*. The sinner that having been often reprov'd hardens his neck, shall *die at length without instruction*; he having had general warnings sufficient given him already, he shall have no particular warnings, but he shall die without seeing his danger before hand, shall die because he would not receive instruction, but *in the greatness of his folly* would *go astray*; and so shall his doom be, he shall never find the way home again. They that are so foolish as to chuse the way of sin, it is just with God to leave them to themselves, to go on in it till they come to that destruction which it leads to, which is a good reason why we should guard with watchfulness and resolution against the allurements of the sensual appetite.

C H A P. VI.

In this chapter we have, 1. A caution against rash suretiship, ver. 1,—5. 2. A rebuke to slothfulness, ver. 6,—11. 3. The character and fate of a malicious mischievous man, ver. 12,—15. 4. An account of seven things which God hates, ver. 16,—19. 5. An exhortation to make the word of God familiar to us, ver. 20,—23. 6. A repeated warning of the pernicious consequences of the sin of whoredom, ver. 24,—35. And we are here dissuaded from sin very much by arguments borrowed from our secular interests, for it is not only represented as damning in the other world, but as impoverishing in this.

MY son, if thou be surety for thy friend; if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger. 2. Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the word of thy mouth. 3. Do this now, my son, and deliver thy self; when thou art come into the hand of thy friend: go humble thy self, and make sure thy friend: 4. Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eye-lids. 5. Deliver thy self as a roe from the hand of the hunter; and as a bird from the hand of the fowler.

It is the excellency of the word of God, that it teacheth us not only divine wisdom for another world, but human prudence for this world, that we may order our affairs with discretion, and this is one good rule to avoid suretiship, because by it poverty and ruin are often brought into families, which take away that comfort in relations which he had recommended in the foregoing chapter.

1. We must look upon suretiship as a snare, and decline it accordingly, ver. 1, 2. It is dangerous enough for a man to be bound for his friend, though it were one whose circumstances he is well acquainted with, and well assured of his sufficiency; but much more to *strike the hands with a stranger*, to become surety for one whom thou dost not know to be either able or honest. Or the stranger here, with whom the hand is stricken, is the creditor, the usurer to whom thou art become bound, and yet as to thee he is a stranger, i. e. thou owest him nothing; nor hast had any dealings with him: If thou hast rashly entered into such engagements, either wheedled into them, or in hopes to have the same kindness done for thee another time; know that *thou art snared with the words of thy mouth*, it was easily done with a word's speaking, it was but setting thy hand to a paper, a bond is soon sealed and delivered, and a recognizance entered into, but it will not be so easily got clear of, thou art *in a snare* more than thou art aware of. See how little reason we have to make light of tongue-sins; if by a word of our mouth we may become indebted to men, and lie open to their actions, by the words of our mouth we may become obnoxious to God's justice, and even so may be snared. It is false that words are but wind, they are often snares. 2. If we have been drawn into this snare, it will be our wisdom by all means, with all speed to get out of it, ver. 3, 4, 5. It sleeps for the present, we hear nothing of it, the debt is not demanded, the principal saith, never fear, we will take care of it. But still the bond is in force, interest is running on, the creditor may come upon thee when he will; and, perhaps, may be hasty and severe, the principal may prove either knavish or insolvent, and then thou must rob thy wife and children, and ruin thy family to pay that which thou didst neither eat nor drink for. And therefore *deliver thy self*, rest not till either the creditor give up the bond, or the principal give that counter security; when *thou art come into the hand of thy friend*, and he has advantage against thee, it is no time to threaten, or give ill language, that will provoke, and make ill worse, but *humble thy self*, beg and pray to be discharged, go down on thy knees to them, and give them all the fair words thou canst, engage thy friends to speak for thee, leave no stone unturned till thou hast agreed with thine adversary, and compromised the matter, so that thy bond may not come against thee or thine. This is a care which may well break thy sleep, and

and let it do so till thou hast got through it: *Give not sleep to thine eyes*, till thou hast *delivered thy self*. Strive and struggle to the utmost, and hasten with all speed *as a ree* or a *bird* delivers her self out of the snare of the *fowler*, or hunter. Delays are dangerous, and feeble efforts will not serve. See what care God in his word has taken to make men good husbands of their estates, and to teach them prudence in the management of them. *Godliness* has precepts as well as promises relating to *the life that now is*.

But how are we to understand this? we are not to think it is unlawful in any case to become surety, or bail for another; it may be a piece of justice or charity; he that has friends may see cause in this instance to shew himself friendly, and it may be no piece of imprudence: Paul became bound for Onesimus, *Philemon* 19. We may help a young man into business, that we know to be honest and diligent, and gain him credit by passing our words for him, and so do him a great kindness without any detriment to our selves. But, 1. It is every man's wisdom to keep out of debt as much as may be, for it is an encumbrance upon him, entangles him in the world, puts him in danger of doing wrong, or suffering wrong; the *borrower is servant to the lender*, and makes himself very much a slave to the world: Christians therefore that are *bought with a price*, should not thus without need make themselves *the servants of men*, 1 Cor. vii. 23. 2. It is great folly to entangle ourselves with necessitous people, and to become bound for their debts, that are ever and anon taking up money, and lading, as we say, out of one hole into another, for it is ten to one but some time or other it comes upon us. A man ought never to be bound as surety for more than he is both able and willing to pay, and can afford to pay without wronging his family, in case the principal fail, for he ought to look upon it as his own debt, *Ecc. viii. 13. Be not surety above thy power, for if thou be surety thou must take care to pay it*. 3. It is a necessary piece of after-wit, if we have foolishly entangled our selves, to get out of the snare as fast as we can, to lose no time, spare no pains, and stick at no submission, to make our selves safe and easy, and get our affairs into a good posture. It is better humble our selves for an accommodation, than ruin our selves by our stiffness and haughtiness. *Make sure thy friend*, by getting clear from thine engagements from him; for rash suretiship is as much the bane of friendship, as that which is prudent is sometimes the bond of it. 4. Let us take heed lest we any way make our selves guilty of other mens sins against God, (1 Tim. v. 22.) for that is worse, and much more dangerous, than being bound for other mens debts: and if we must be in all this care to get our debts to men forgiven, much more to get our peace made with God; *humble thy self* to him, *make sure Christ thy friend*, to intercede for thee; pray earnestly that thy sins may be pardoned, and thou mayest be delivered from going down to the pit, and it shall not be in vain. *Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eye-lids*, till this be done.

6. ¶ Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise: 7. Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, 8. Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. 9. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? 10. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. 11. So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.

Solomon in these verses applies himself to the sluggard that loves his ease, lives in idleness, minds no business, sticks to nothing, brings nothing to pass, and in a particular manner is careless in the business of religion. Slothfulness is as sure a way to poverty, though not so short a way, as rash suretiship.

He speaks here to the sluggard,

(1.) By way of instruction, *ver. 6, 7, 8*. He sends him to school, for sluggards must be schooled. He is both to take him to school himself, for if the scholar will take no pains, the master must take the more; the sluggard is not willing to come to school to him, dreaming scholars will never love wakeful teachers, and therefore he has found him out another school, as low as he can desire. Observe,

1. The master he is sent to school to: *Go to the ant; to the bee*, so the Seventy. Man is taught more than the beasts of the earth, and made wiser than the fowls of heaven, and yet is so degenerated, that he may learn wisdom from the meanest insects, and be shamed by them. When we observe the wonderful sagacities of the inferior creatures, we must not only give glory to the God of nature, who has made them thus strangely, but receive instruction to our selves; by spiritualizing common things, we may make the things of God both easy and ready to us, and converse with them daily.

2. The application of mind that is required in order to the learning of this master. *Consider her ways*. The sluggard is so because he doth not consider; nor shall we ever learn to any purpose, either by the word or works of God, unless we set ourselves to consider. Particularly, if we would imitate others in that which

is good, we must consider their ways, diligently observe what they do, that we may do likewise, *Phil. iii. 17*.

3. The lesson that is to be learned. In general, learn wisdom, *consider, and be wise*; that is the thing we are to aim at in all our learning, not only to be knowing, but to be wise; in particular, learn to *provide meat in summer*; that is, 1. We must prepare for hereafter, and not mind the present time only; not eat up all, and lay up nothing; but in gathering time treasure up for a spending time. Thus provident we must be in our worldly affairs, not with an anxious care, but with a prudent foresight; lay in for winter, for straits and wants that may happen, and for old age; much more in the affairs of our souls: We must provide meat and food, that which is substantial, and will stand us in stead, and which we shall most need. In the enjoyment of the means of grace provide for the want of them, in life for death, in time for eternity; in the state of probation and preparation, we must provide for the state of retribution. 2. We must take pains, and labour in our business, yea, though we labour under inconveniencies; even *in summer*, when the weather is hot, the ant is busy in *gathering food*, and laying it up, and doth not indulge her ease, nor take her pleasure, as the grass-hopper, that sings and sports in the summer, and then periseth in the winter. The ants help one another; if one have a grain of corn too big for her to carry home, her neighbours will come in to her assistance. 3. We must improve opportunities, we must gather when it is to be had, as the ant doth in *summer* and *harvest*, in the proper time. It is our wisdom to improve the season while that favours us, because that may be done then, which cannot be done at all, or not so well done at another time. *Walk while ye have the light*.

4. The advantages which we have of learning this lesson above what the ant has, which will aggravate our slothfulness and neglect, if we idle away our time; she has *no guides, overseers, and rulers*, but doth it of her self, following the instinct of nature, the more shame for us who do not in like manner follow the dictates of our own reason and conscience, though besides them we have parents, masters, ministers, magistrates, to put us in mind of our duty, to check us for the neglect of it, to quicken us to it, and direct us in it, and to call us to an account about it. The greater helps we have for working out our salvation, the more inexcusable shall we be if we neglect it.

(2.) By way of reproof, *ver. 9, 10, 11*. In these verses,

1. He expostulates with the sluggard, rebuking him, and reasoning with him; calling him to his work, as a master doth his servant that hath over-slept himself. *How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?* How long wouldst thou sleep if one would let thee alone; *when wilt thou think it time to arise?* Sluggards should be rowzed with a *How long?* This is applicable, 1. To those that are slothful in the way of work and duty; in the duties of their particular calling as men, or their general calling as christians. *How long wilt thou waste thy time?* and *when wilt thou be a better husband of it?* *How long wilt thou love thine ease?* and *when wilt thou learn to deny thy self, and to take pains?* *How long wilt thou bury thy talents?* and *when wilt thou begin to trade with them?* *How long wilt thou delay, and put off, and trifle away thine opportunities,* as one regardless of hereafter? and *when wilt thou stir up thy self to do what thou hast to do, which if it be not done, thou art for ever undone?* 2. To those that are secure in the way of sin and danger. Hast thou not slept enough? Is it not far in the day? Doth not thy Master call? Are not the Philistines upon thee? *When then wilt thou arise?*

2. He exposeth his frivolous excuses he makes for himself, and shews how ridiculous he makes himself; when he is rowzed he stretches himself, and begs as for alms for more *sleep*; more *slumber*; he is well in his warm bed, and cannot endure to think of rising, especially of rising to work: but, observe, he promiseth himself and his master, that he will desire but *a little more sleep*, *a little more slumber*, and then he will get up and go to his business. But herein he deceives himself; the more a slothful temper is indulged, the more it prevails; let him sleep a while, and slumber a while, and still he is in the same tune; is for *a little more sleep*, yet *a little more*; he never thinks he has enough, and yet when he is called, pretends he will come presently. Thus mens great work is left undone by being put off yet a little longer, *de die in diem*; and they are cheated of all their time by being cheated of the present moments; a little more sleep proves an everlasting sleep: *Sleep on now, and take your rest*.

3. He gives him fair warning of the fatal consequences of his slothfulness, *ver. 11*. 1. *Poverty and want* will certainly come upon those that are slothful in their business; if men neglect their affairs, they not only will not go forward, but they will go backward; he that leaves his concerns at sixes and sevens, will soon see them go to wreck and ruin, and bring his noble to nine-pence. Spiritual poverty comes upon those that are slothful in the service of God; those will want oil when they should use it that provide it not in their vessels. 2. It will come silently, and insensibly, will grow upon thee, and come step by step, *as one that travelleth*; but will without fail come at last. *It will leave thee as naked, as if thou wast stript by a highwayman*; so bishop Patrick. 3. It will come irresistibly, *like an armed man*, whom thou canst not oppose, or make thy part good against.

12. ¶ A naughty person, a wicked man walketh with a froward mouth. 13. He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers. 14. Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually, he soweth discord. 15. Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy. 16. ¶ These six things doth the LORD hate; yea, seven are an abomination unto him: 17. A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, 18. An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief; 19. A false witness that speaketh lies, and him that soweth discord among brethren.

Solomon here gives us,

(1.) The characters of one that is mischievous to man, and dangerous to be dealt with. If the slothful are to be condemned that do nothing, much more those that do ill, and contrive to do all the ill they can. It is a *naughty person* that is here spoken of, *Heb. A man of Belial*; I think it should have been so translated, because it is a term often used in scripture, and this is the explication of it. Observe;

1. How a man of Belial is here described; he is a *wicked man* that makes a trade of doing evil, especially with his tongue, for he walks, and works his designs, with a froward mouth, ver. 12. by lying, and perverseness, and a direct opposition to God and man. He saith, and doeth every thing, (1.) Very artfully, and with design; he has the subtilty of the serpent, and carries on his projects with a great deal of craft and management, ver. 13. *With his eyes, with his feet, with his fingers*, he expresseth his malice, *when he dares not speak out*, so some; or rather, thus he carries on his plot; those about him whom he makes use of as the tools of his wickedness, understand the ill meaning of a wink of his eye, a stamp of his feet, the least motion of his fingers. He gives orders for evil-doing, and yet would not be thought to do so, but has ways of concealing what he doth, so that he may not be suspected. He is a close man, and upon the reserve, those only shall be let into the secret that will do any thing he would have them to do; he is a cunning man, and upon the trick, he has a language by himself, which an honest man is not acquainted with, nor desires to be. (2.) Very spitefully, and with ill design; it is not so much ambition and covetousness that is in his heart, as downright frowardness, malice, and ill nature: He aims not so much to enrich and advance himself, as to do an ill turn to those about him: He is continually devising one mischief or other, purely for mischief sake; a man of Belial indeed, i. e. of the devil, not only resembling him in subtilty, but in malice.

2. What his doom is, ver. 15. *His calamity shall come*, and he shall be broken; he that devised mischief shall fall into mischief. His ruin shall come, 1. Without warning, it shall come suddenly, suddenly shall he be broken, to punish him for all the wicked arts he had to surprize people into his snares. 2. Without relief; he shall be irreparably broken, and never able to piece again; he shall be broken without remedy. What relief can he expect that has disobliged all mankind? He shall come to his end, and none shall help him, Dan. xi. 45.

(2.) A catalogue of those things which are in a special manner odious to God, all which are generally to be found in those men of Belial, which he had described in the foregoing verses; and the last of them (which being the seventh, seems especially to be intended, because he saith they are six, yea seven) is part of his character, that he sows discord. God hates sin, he hates every sin, he can never be reconciled to it; he hates nothing but sin: But there are some sins which he doth in a special manner hate; and all those here mentioned, are such as are injurious to our neighbour. It is an evidence of the good-will God bears to mankind, that those sins are in a special manner provoking to him, which are prejudicial to the comfort of human life and society. Therefore the men of Belial must expect their ruin to come suddenly, and without remedy, because their practices are such as the Lord hates, and are an abomination to him, ver. 16. These things which God hates, it is no thanks to us to hate in others, but we must hate them in our selves.

1. Haughtiness, conceitedness of our selves, and contempt of others; a proud look. There are seven things that God hates, and pride is the first, because it is at the bottom of much sin, and gives rise to it. God sees the pride in the heart, and hates it there, but when it prevails to that degree that the shew of mens countenance witnesseth against them, that they over-value themselves, and under-value all about them, this is in a special manner hateful to him; for then pride is proud of it self, and sets shame at defiance.

2. Falshood, and fraud, and dissimulation: Next to a proud look, nothing is more an abomination to God, than a lying tongue; nothing more sacred than truth, nor more necessary to conversation than speaking truth: God and all good men hate and abhor lying.

3. Cruelty and blood-thirstiness: The devil was from the beginning a liar and a murderer, John viii. 44. and therefore as a lying tongue, so hands that shed innocent blood, are hateful to God,

because they have in them the devil's image; and do him service.

4. Subtilty in the contrivance of sin, wisdom to do evil, a heart that designs, and a head that deviseth wicked imaginations, that is acquainted with the depths of Satan, and knows how to carry on a covetous, envious, revengeful plot; most effectually. The more there is of craft and management in sin; the more it is an abomination to God.

5. Vigour and diligence in the prosecution of sin: Feet that are swift in running to mischief, as if they were afraid of losing time, or were impatient of delay in a thing they are so greedy of. The policy and vigilance, the eagerness and industry of sinners, in their sinful pursuits, may shame us who go about that which is good so awkwardly and so coldly.

6. False witness-bearing, which is one of the greatest mischiefs that of all the wicked imaginations can be devised, and against which there is least fence. There cannot be a greater affront to God (to whom in an oath appeal is made) nor a greater injury to our neighbour (all whose interests in this world, even the dearest, lie open to an attack of this kind) than knowingly to give in a false testimony. There are seven things which God hates, and lying is two of them; he hates it, and double hates it.

7. Making mischief between relations and neighbours, and using all wicked means possible, not only to alienate their affections one from another, but to irritate their passions one against another. The God of love and peace hates him that soweth discord among brethren, for he delights in concord. Those that by tale-bearing and slandering, by carrying ill-natured stories, aggravating every thing that is said and done, and suggesting jealousies and evil surmises, blow the coals of contention, are but preparing for themselves a fire of the same nature.

20. ¶ My son, keep thy fathers commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother. 21. Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. 22. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. 23. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life: 24. To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman. 25. Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eye-lids. 26. For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulterers will hunt for the precious life. 27. Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt? 28. Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt? 29. So he that goeth in to his neighbours wife: whosoever toucheth her, shall not be innocent. 30. Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry: 31. But if he be found, he shall restore seven-fold, he shall give all the substance of his house. 32. But whoso committeth adultery with a woman, lacketh understanding: he that doeth it, destroyeth his own soul. 33. A wound and dishonour shall he get, and his reproach shall not be wiped away. 34. For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. 35. He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts.

Here is, (1.) A general exhortation faithfully to adhere to the word of God, and to take it for our guide in all our actions.

1. We must look upon the word of God, both as a light, ver. 23. and as a law, ver. 20, 23. 1. By its arguments it is a light, which our understandings must subscribe to; it is a lamp to our eyes for discovery, and so to our feet for direction: The word of God reveals to us truths of eternal certainty, and is built upon the highest reason: Scripture light is the sure light. 2. By its authority it is a law, which our wills must submit to. As never such a light shone out of the schools of the philosophers, so never such a law issued from the throne of any prince; so well framed, and so binding. It is such a law as is a lamp and a light, for it carries with it the evidence of its own goodness.

2. We must receive it as our father's commandment, and the law of our mother, ver. 20. It is God's commandment, and his law. But, 1. Our parents directed us to it, put it into our hands, trained us up in the knowledge and observance of it, its original and obligation being most sacred. We believe indeed, not for their saying, for we have tried it our selves, and find it to be of God; but we were beholden to them for recommending it to us, and see all the reason in the world to continue in the things we have learned, knowing of whom we have learned them. 2. The cautions, counsels, and commands, which our parents gave us, agree with the word of God, and therefore we must hold them fast. Children,

when they are grown up, must remember *the law of a good mother*, as well as the *commandment of a good father*, *Ecclesiasticus iii.*
 2. *The Lord hath given the father honour over the children, and hath confirmed the authority of the mother over the sons.*

3. We must retain the word of God, and the good instructions which our parents gave us out of it. 1. We must never cast them off, never think it a mighty achievement (as some do) to get clear of the restraints of a good education. *Keep thy father's commandment*, keep it still, and never forsake it. 2. We must never lay them by, no not for a time, *ver. 21. Bind them continually*, not only upon thine hand, as Moses had directed, *Deut. vi. 8.* but upon thine heart. Phylacteries upon the hand were of no value at all, any further than they occasioned pious thoughts and affections in the heart: There the word must be written, there it must be hid, and laid close to the conscience. *Tie them about thy neck*, as an ornament, a bracelet, or gold chain *about thy throat*, so the word is; let them be a guard upon that pass; tie them about thy throat, that no forbidden fruit may be suffered to go in, nor any evil word suffered to go out through the throat; and thus a great deal of sin would be prevented. Let the word of God be always ready to us, and let us feel the impressions of it, as of that which is bound upon our hearts, and about our necks.

4. We must make use of the word of God, and of the benefit and advantage that is designed us by it. If we bind it continually upon our hearts, 1. It will be our guide, and we must follow the conduct of it. *When thou goest, it shall lead thee*, *ver. 22.* it shall lead thee into, and lead thee in the good and right way; shall lead thee from, and lead thee out of every sinful, dangerous path: It will say unto thee, when thou art ready to turn aside, *This is the way, walk in it*: It will be that to thee that the pillar of cloud and fire was to Israel in the wilderness: Be led by that, let it be thy rule, and then thou shalt be led by the Spirit; he will be thy monitor and support. 2. It will be our guard, and we must put our selves under the protection of it; *when thou sleepest, and liest exposed to the malignant powers of darkness, it shall keep thee*; thou shalt be safe, and shalt think thy self so. If we govern our selves by the precepts of the word all day, and make conscience of the duty God has commanded to us, we may shelter our selves under the promises of the word at night, and take the comfort of the deliverances God doth and will command for us. 3. It will be our companion, and we must converse with it; *when thou awakest in the night, and knowest not how to pass away thy waking minutes, if thou pleasest, it shall talk with thee*, and entertain thee with pleasant meditations in the night-watches; *when thou awakest in the morning, and art contriving the work of the day, it shall talk with thee* about it, and help thee to contrive for the best, *Psalms i. 2.* The word of God hath something to say to us upon all occasions, if we would but enter into discourse with it, would ask it what it has to say, and give it the hearing. And it would contribute to our close and comfortable walking with God all day, if we would begin with him in the morning, and let his word be the subject of our first thoughts. *When I awake I am still with thee*; we are so, if the word be still with us. 4. It will be our life; for as the law is a lamp, and a light for the present, so the *reproofs of instruction are the way of life*: Those reproofs of the word, which not only shew us our faults, but instruct us how to do better, are the way that leads to life, eternal life. Let not faithful reproofs therefore, which have such a direct tendency to make us happy, ever make us uneasy.

(2.) Here is a particular caution against the sin of uncleanness: When we consider how much this iniquity abounds, how heinous it is in its own nature, of what pernicious consequence it is, and how certainly destructive to all the seeds of the spiritual life in the soul, we will not wonder that the cautions against it are so oft repeated, and so largely inculcated.

(1.) One great kindness God designed men in giving them his law, was to preserve them from this sin, *ver. 24.* The reproofs of instruction are therefore *the way of life* to thee, because they are designed to keep thee from the evil woman that will be certain death to thee, from being enticed by the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman, that pretends to love thee, but intends to ruin thee. Those that will be wrought upon by flattery, make themselves a very easy prey to the tempter; and those who would avoid that snare must take well instructed reproofs as great kindnesses, and be thankful to those that will deal faithfully with them, *Prov. xxvii. 5, 6.*

(2.) The greatest kindness we can do our selves, is to keep at a distance from this sin, and to look upon it with the utmost dread and detestation, *ver. 25. Lust not after her beauty*, no not in thy heart, for if thou dost thou hast there already committed adultery with her. Talk not of the charms in her face, neither be thou smitten with her amorous glances; they are all snares and nets; let her not take thee with her eye-lids. Her looks are arrows and fiery darts, they wound, they kill, in another sense than what lovers mean; they call it a pleasing captivity, but it is a destroying one, it is worse than Egyptian slavery.

Divers arguments Solomon here urgeth to enforce this caution against the sin of whoredom.

1. It is a sin that impoverisheth men, wastes their estates, and reduceth them to beggary, *ver. 26. By means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread*; many a man has been so,

who has purchased the ruin of his body and soul at the expence of his wealth. The prodigal son spent his living on harlots, so that he brought himself to be fellow-commoner with the swine. And that poverty must needs lie heavy which men bring themselves into by their own folly. *Job xxxi. 12.*

2. It threatens death, it kills men; *the adulterers will hunt for the precious life*, perhaps designedly, as Delilah for Sampson's, at least eventually, the sin strikes at the life: Adultery was punished by the law of Moses as a capital crime; *the adulterer and adulteress shall surely be put to death*; every one knew this; those therefore who for the gratifying of a base lust would lay themselves open to the law, could be reckoned no better than self-murderers.

3. It brings guilt upon the conscience, and debaucheth that: He that toucheth his neighbour's wife, with any immodest touch, he cannot be innocent, *ver. 29.* 1. He is in imminent danger of adultery, as he that takes fire in his bosom, or goes upon hot coals, is in danger of being burnt: The way of this sin is down hill, and those that venture upon the temptations to it, hardly escape the sin itself. The fly fools away her life by playing the wanton with the flames. It is a deep pit, which it is madness to venture upon the brink of. He that keeps company with those of ill fame, that goes in with them, and toucheth them, cannot long preserve his innocency; he thrusts himself into temptation, and so throws himself out of God's protection. 2. He that commits adultery is in the high road to destruction. The bold presumptuous sinner saith, I may venture upon the sin, and yet escape the punishment; I shall have peace though I go on: He had as good say, I will take fire into my bosom, and not burn my clothes; or, I will go upon hot coals, and not burn my feet: He that goes in to his neighbour's wife, however he holds himself, God will not hold him guiltless. The fire of lust kindles the fire of hell.

4. It ruins the reputation, and entails perpetual infamy upon that. It is a much more scandalous sin than stealing is, *ver. 30, 31, 32, 33.* perhaps, it is not so in the account of men, at least not in our day. A thief is sent to the stocks, to the goal, to Bridewell, to the gallows, while the vile adulterer goes unpunished; nay, and with many unblemished; he dares boast of his villainies, and they are made but a jest of; but in the account of God and his law, adultery was much the more enormous crime; and if God is the fountain of honour, his word must be the standard of it. 1. As for the sin of stealing, if a man were brought to it by extremest necessity, if he stole meat for the satisfying of his soul when he was hungry, though that will not excuse him from guilt, yet it is such an extenuation of his crime, that men do not despise him, do not expose him to ignominy, but pity him; hunger will break through stone-walls, and blame will be laid upon those that brought him to poverty, or that did not relieve him; nay, though he have not that to say in his excuse, if he be found stealing, and the evidence be never so plain from him, yet he shall only make restitution seven-fold; the law of Moses appointed, that he that stole a sheep should restore four-fold, an ox five-fold, *Exod. xxii. 1.* accordingly David adjudged, *2 Sam. xii. 6.* But we may suppose in these cases, concerning which the law had not made provision, the judges afterwards settled the penalties in proportion to the crimes, according to the equity of the law: Now if he that stole an ox out of a man's field must restore five-fold, it was reasonable he that stole a man's goods out of his house, should restore seven-fold; for there was no law to put him to death, as is with us for burglary, and robbery on the high-way. And of this worst kind of theft Solomon here speaks; the greatest punishment was, that a man might be forced to give all the substance of his house to satisfy the law, and his blood was not attained. But, 2. Committing adultery is a more heinous crime, Job calls it so, and *an iniquity to be punished by the judge*, *Job xxxi. 11.* When Nathan would convict David of the evil of his adultery, he did it by a parable concerning the most aggravated theft, which in David's judgment deserved to be punished with death, *2 Sam. xii. 5.* and then shewed him that his sin was more exceeding sinful than that. (1.) It is a greater reproach to a man's reason, for he cannot excuse it as a thief may, by saying it was to satisfy his hunger, but must own it was to gratify a brutish lust that would break the hedge of God's law, not for want, but for wantonness. Therefore *who so committeth adultery with a woman, lacks understanding*, and deserves to be stigmatized as an arrant fool. (2.) It is more severely punished by the law of God; a thief suffered only a pecuniary mulct, but the adulterer suffered death. The thief steals to satisfy his soul, but the adulterer destroys his own soul, and falls an unpitied sacrifice to the justice both of God and man. Sinner, thou hast destroyed thy self. This may be applied to the spiritual and eternal death, which are the consequences of sin; he that doth it wounds his conscience, corrupts his rational power, extinguisheth all the sparks of the spiritual life, and exposeth himself to the wrath of God for ever, and thus destroys his own soul. (3.) The infamy of it is indelible, *ver. 23.* It will be a wound to his good name, a dishonour to his family, and though the guilt of it may be done away by repentance, the reproach of it never will, but will stick to his memory when he is gone. David's sin in the matter of Uriah, was not only a perpetual blemish upon his own character, but gave occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme his name too.

5. It exposeth the adulterer to the rage of the jealous husband, whose honour he puts such an affront upon, *ver. 34, 35*. He that toucheth his neighbour's wife, and is familiar with her, gives him occasion for jealousy, much more he that debaucheth her, which if kept never so secret, might then be discovered by the waters of jealousy, Numb. v. 12. And when discovered, thou hadst better meet a bear robbed of her whelps, than the injured husband, who in the case of adultery, will be as severe an avenger of his own honour, as in the case of manslaughter, of his brother's blood. If thou art not afraid of the wrath of God, yet be afraid of the rage of a man, such jealousy is, it is strong as death, and cruel as the grave. In the day of vengeance, when the adulterer comes to be tried for his life, the prosecutor will not spare any pains or cost in the prosecution, will not relent towards thee, as he would perhaps towards one that had robbed him; he will not accept of any commutation, any composition, *he will not regard any ransom*, though thou offer to bribe him, and give him many gifts to pacify him, *he will not rest content* with any thing less than the execution of the law, thou must be stoned to death; if a man would give all the substance of his house, it would atone for a theft, *ver. 3, 11*. but not for adultery, in that case it would utterly be condemned. Stand in awe therefore, and sin not, expose not thy self to all this misery for a moment's fordid pleasure, which will be bitterness in the end.

C H A P VII.

The scope of this chapter is, as of several before, to warn young men against the lusts of the flesh. Solomon remembered of what ill consequence it was to his father, perhaps found himself, and perceived his son addicted to it, or at least had observed how many hopeful young men among his subjects had been ruined by those lusts, and therefore he thought he could never say enough to dissuade men from them, that every one may possess his vessel in sanctification, and honour, and not in the lusts of uncleanness. In this chapter we have, 1. A general exhortation to get our minds principled and governed by the word of God, as a sovereign antidote against this sin, *ver. 1,—5*. 2. A particular representation of the great danger which unwary young men are in, of being inveigled into this snare, *ver. 6,—23*. 3. A serious caution inferred from thence in the close, to take heed of all approaches towards this sin, *ver. 24,—27*. We should all pray, Lord, lead us not into this temptation.

1. **M**Y son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. 2. Keep my commandments, and live: and my law as the apple of thine eye. 3. Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart. 4. Say unto wisdom, thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman: 5. That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words.

These verses are an introduction to his warning against fleshly lusts, much the same with that, *chap. vi. 20, &c.* and ends, *ver. 5*. as that did, *ver. 24*. To keep thee from the strange woman, that is it he aims at; only there he had said, keep thy father's commandment, here (which comes all to one) keep my commandments, for he speaks to us as unto sons. He speaks in God's name; for they are God's commandments that we are to keep, his words, his law.

The word of God must be to us,

1. As that which we are most careful of; we must keep it as our treasure, we must lay up God's commandments with us, lay them up safe that we may not be robbed of them by the wicked one, *ver. 1*. As our life, keep my commandments and live, *ver. 2*. Not only keep them and you shall live, but keep them as you would your life, as those that cannot live without them. It would be death to a good man to be deprived of the word of God, for by it he lives, and not by bread alone.

2. As that which we are most tender of, keep my law as the apple of thine eye; a little thing offends the eye, and therefore nature has so well guarded it; we pray with David, that God would keep us as the apple of his eye, *Psal. xvii. 8*. That our lives and comforts may be precious in his sight, and they shall be so, (*Zech. ii. 8*.) if we be in like manner tender of his law, and afraid of the least violation of it. Those who reproach strict and circumspect walking as needless preciseness, consider not that the law is to be kept as the apple of the eye, for indeed it is the apple of our eye, the law is light, the law in the heart is the eye of the soul.

3. As that which we are proud of, and would be ever mindful of, *ver. 3*. Bind them upon thy fingers, let them be precious to thee, look upon them as an ornament, as a diamond-ring, as the signet on thy right hand; wear it continually as thy wedding ring, the badge of thine espousals to God; look upon the word of God as putting an honour upon thee, as an ensign of thy dignity. Bind them on thy fingers, that they may be constant memorandums to

thee of thy duty, that thou mayest have them always in view, as that which is graven upon the palms of thine hands.

4. As that which we are fond of, and are ever thinking of; write them upon the tables of thine heart, as the names of our friends we dearly love, we say are written in our hearts. Let the word of God dwell richly in us, and be written there where it will be always at hand to be read. Where sin was written, (*Jer. xvii. 1*.) let the word of God be written. It is the matter of a promise, *Heb. viii. 10*. I will write my law in their hearts; which makes the precept practicable and easy.

5. As that which we are intimately acquainted and conversant with, *ver. 4*. Say unto wisdom, thou art my sister, whom I dearly love, and take delight in, and call understanding my kinswoman, to whom I am nearly allied, and for whom I have a pure affection; call her thy friend whom thou courtest. We must make the word of God familiar to us, consult it, and consult its honour, and take a pleasure in conversing with it.

6. As that which we make use of for our defence and armour, to keep us from the strange woman, from sin, that flattering, but destroying thing, that adulteress; particularly from the sin of uncleanness, *ver. 5*. Let the word of God confirm our dread of that sin, and our resolutions against it; let it discover to us its fallacies, and suggest to us answers to all its flatteries.

6. ¶ For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, 7. And beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding, 8. Passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house, 9. In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night: 10. And behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart. 11. (She is loud and stubborn, and her feet abide not in her house, 12. Now is she without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner) 13. So she caught him and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him. 14. I have peace-offerings with me; this day have I payed my vows. 15. Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee. 16. I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt. 17. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. 18. Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning, let us solace our selves with loves. 19. For the good man is not at home, he is gone a long journey; 20. He hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed. 21. With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. 22. He goeth after her straightway as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks: 23. Till a dart strike through his liver, as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life.

Solomon here to enforce the caution he had given against the sin of whoredom, tells a story of a young man that was ruined to all intents and purposes, by the enticements of an adulterous woman. Such a story as this would serve the lewd profane poets of our age to make a play of, and the harlot with them would be a heroine, nothing would be so entertaining to the audience, nor give them so much diversion, as her arts of beguiling the young gentleman, and drawing in the country-squire; her conquests would be celebrated as the triumphs of wit and love, and the comedy would conclude very pleasantly; and every young man that saw it acted would covet to be so picked up: Thus fools make a mock at sin. But Solomon here relates it, and all wise and good men read it as a very melancholy story, the impudence of the adulterous woman is very justly looked upon, by all that have any sparks of virtue in them, with the highest indignation, and the easiness of the young man, with the tenderest compassion; and the story concludes with sad reflections, enough to make all that read and hear it afraid of the snares of fleshly lusts, and careful to keep at the utmost distance from them. It is supposed to be a parable, or made case, but I doubt it was too true, and which is worse, that notwithstanding the warning it gives of the fatal consequences of such wicked courses, it is still too often true, and the agents for hell are still playing the same game, and with like success.

Solomon was a magistrate, and as such inspected the manners of his subjects, looked oft through his casement, that he might see with his own eyes, and made remarks upon those who little thought his eye was upon them, that he might know the better how to make the sword he bore, a terror to evil-doers. But here he writes as a minister, a prophet, who is by office a watchman, to give warning of the approach of the enemies, and especially where they lie in ambush, that we may not be ignorant of Satan's devices,

devices, but may know where to double our guard. This Solomon doth here, where we may observe the account he gives,

1. Of the person tempted, and how he laid himself open to the temptation, and therefore must thank himself if it end in his destruction. 1. He was a *young man*, ver. 7. *Fleshly lusts* are called *youthful lusts*, 2 Tim. ii. 22. not to extenuate them as tricks of youth, and therefore excusable, but to aggravate them, rather as robbing God of the first and best of our time, and by debauching the mind when it is tender, laying a foundation for an ill life ever after; and to intimate that young people ought in a special manner to fortify their resolutions against this sin. 2. He was a young man, *void of understanding*, that went abroad into the world, not principled as he ought to have been, with wisdom and the fear of God, and so ventured to sea without ballast, without pilot, cord, or compass; he knew not how to depart from evil, which is the best understanding, Job xxviii. 28. Those become an easy prey to Satan, who, when they are arrived to the stature of men, have scarce the understanding of children. 3. He kept bad company; he was a *young man among the youths*, a silly young man *among the simple ones*; if being conscious of his own weakness, he had associated with those that were elder and wiser than himself, there had been hopes of him; Christ at twelve years old conversed with the doctors, to set young people an example of this; but if those that are simple, chuse such for their companions as are like themselves, simple they will still be, and hardened in their simplicity. 4. He was *sauntering*, and had nothing to do, but *passed through the street*, as one that knew not how to dispose of himself. One of the sins of filthy Sodom, was *abundance of idleness*, Ezek. xvi. 49. He went in a starched stately manner, so (they say) the word signifies, he appeared to be a nice formal fop; the top of whose accomplishments was to dress well, and walk with a good air; fit game for that bird of prey to fly at. 5. He was a night-walker, that hated and scorned the business that is to be done by day-light, from which the evening calls men into their repose; and having fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, begins to move *in the twilight in the evening*, ver. 9. And he chuseth *the black and dark night* as fittest for his purpose, not the moon-light nights, when he might be discovered. 6. He steered his course towards the house of one that he thought would entertain him, and that he might be merry with; he went *near her corner, the way to her house*, ver. 8. contrary to Solomon's advice, Prov. v. 4. *Come not nigh the door of her house*. Perhaps he did not know it was the way to an ill house, but however, it was a way that he had no business in, and when we have nothing to do, the devil will quickly find us something to do. We must take heed, not only of idle days, but of idle evenings, lest they prove inlets into temptation.

(2.) Of the person tempting; not a common prostitute, for she was a married wife, ver. 19. and for ought appears, lived in reputation among her neighbours, not suspected of any such wickedness, and yet in the *twilight of the evening*, when her husband was abroad, abominably impudent. She is here described, 1. By her dress, she had the *attire of a harlot*, ver. 10. gaudy and flaunting to set her off as a beauty, perhaps she was painted as Jezebel, and went with her neck and breasts bare, loose, and *undeshabillee*. The purity of the heart will shew it self in the modesty of the dress, which *becomes women professing godliness*. 2. By her craft and management, she is *subtil of heart*, mistress of all the arts of wheedling, and knowing how by all her caresses to serve her own base purposes. 3. By her temper and carriage, *she is loud and stubborn*, talkative and self-willed, noisy and troublesome, wilful and head-strong, all tongue, and that will have her saying, right or wrong, impatient of check and control, and cannot bear to be counselled, much less reproved by husband, or parents, ministers, or friends; she is a *daughter of Belial*, that will endure no yoke. 4. By her place, not her own house, she hates the confinement and employment of that, *her feet abide not there*, any longer than needs must. She is all for gadding abroad, changing place and company, *now is she without* in the country, under pretence of taking the air, *now in the streets* of the city, under pretence of seeing how the market goes; she is here, and there and every where, but where she should be; she *lies in wait at every corner* to pick up such as she can make a prey of. Those to whom home is a prison, virtue is a penance.

(3.) Of the temptation it self, and the management of it. She met the young spark, perhaps she knew him, however she knew by his fashions, he was such a one as she wished for, so she *caught him about the neck and kissed him*, contrary to all the rules of modesty, ver. 13. and waited not for his compliments or courtship, but *with an impudent face* invited him not only to *her house* but to *her bed*.

1. She courted him to come *sup with her*, ver. 14, 15. *I have peace-offerings with me*. Hereby she gives him to understand, (1.) Her prosperity, that she was compassed about with so many blessings, that she had occasion to offer peace-offerings, in token of joy and thankfulness, she was beforehand in the world, so that he needed not fear having his pocket picked. (2.) Her profession of piety; she had been to day at the temple, and was as well respected there, as any that worshipped in the courts of the Lord, she had paid her vows, and, as she thought, made even with God Almighty,

and therefore might venture upon a new score of sins. Note, The external performances of religion, if they do not harden men against sin, harden them in it, and embolden carnal hearts to venture upon it, in hopes, that when they come to count and discount with God, he will be found as much in debt to them for their peace-offerings and their vows, as they to him for their sins. But it is sad that a shew of piety should become the shelter of iniquity, which really doubles the shame of it, and makes it more exceeding sinful; and that men should baffle their consciences with those very things that should startle them. The Pharisees made long prayers, that they might the more plausibly carry on their covetous and mischievous designs. (3.) Her present plenty of good provisions. The greatest part of the flesh of the peace-offerings, was by the law returned back to the offerers to feast upon with their friends, which (if they were peace-offerings of thanksgiving) was to be all eaten *the same day, and none of it left until the morning*, Lev. vii. 15. This law of charity and generosity, is abused to be a colour for gluttony and excess; come, faith she, come home with me, for I have good cheer enough, and only want good company to help me off with it. It was pity the peace-offerings should thus become, in a bad sense, sin-offerings, and that what was designed for the honour of God, should become the food and fuel of a base lust.

But this is not all, to strengthen the temptation, 1. She pretends to have a mighty great affection for him above any man; *therefore because I have had a good supper upon the table, I came forth to meet thee*, for no friend in the world shall be so welcome to it as thou shalt, ver. 15. Thou art he whom I came on purpose to seek, to seek diligently; came my self, and would not send a servant. Sure he cannot deny her his company, when she put such a value upon it, and would take all this pains to obtain the favour of it. Sinners take pains to do mischief, and are as the roaring lion himself, they go about seeking to devour, and yet pretend they are seeking to oblige. 2. She would have it thought that providence it self countenanced her choice of him for her companion; for how quickly had she found him whom she sought!

2. She courted him to come *lie with her*; they will sit down to eat and drink, and then rise up to play, to play the wanton, and there is a bed ready for them; where he shall find that which will be in all respects agreeable to him; to please his eye, it is *decked with coverings of tapestry, and carved works*, exquisitely fine, he never saw the like; to please his touch, the sheets are not of home-spun cloth, they are far fetched, and dear bought, they are of *fine linen of Egypt*, ver. 16. to gratify his smell, it is *perfumed with the sweetest scents*, ver. 17. Come therefore and let us take our fill of love, ver. 18. of love doth she say? of lust she means, brutish lust; but it is pity the name of love should be thus abused; true love is from heaven, this is from hell; how can they pretend to solace themselves, and love one another, who are really ruining themselves and one another.

3. She anticipates the objection which he might make of the danger of it. Is she not another man's wife, and what if her husband should catch them in adultery, in the very act, he will make them pay dear for their sport, and where will the solace of their love be then? Never fear, faith she, the *good man is not at home*, ver. 19. she doth not call him her husband, for she *forsook the guide of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God*; but the *good man* of the house, whom I am weary of. Thus Potiphar's wife, when she spake of her husband, would not call him so, but he, Gen. xxxix. 14. It is therefore with good reason taken notice of to Sarah's praise, that she spake respectfully of her husband, calling him Lord. She pleaseth herself with this that he is not at home, and therefore she is melancholy if she have not some company, and therefore whatever company she has, she may be free with them, for she is from under his eye, and he shall never know. But will he not return quickly? No, he is *gone a long journey*, and cannot return on a sudden; he *appointed the day* of his return, and he never useth to come home sooner than he faith he will. *He hath taken a bag of money with him*; either, (1.) To trade with, to buy goods with; and he will not return till he has laid it all out; it was pity that an honest industrious man should be thus abused, and advantage taken by his absence, when it is upon business for the good of his family. Or, (2.) To spend and revel with; whether justly or not, she insinuates that he was an ill husband, so she would represent him; because she was resolved to be an ill wife, and must have that for an excuse; it is often groundlessly suggested, but is never a sufficient excuse. He follows his pleasures, and wastes his estate abroad (faith she) and why should not I do the same at home?

4. Of the success of the temptation. Promising the young man every thing that was pleasant, and impunity in the enjoyment, she gained her point, ver. 21. It should seem the youth, though very simple, had no ill design, else a word, a beck, a wink would have served; and there had not needed all this harangue; but though he did not intend any such thing, nay, had something in his conscience that opposed it, yet *with her much fair speech she caused him to yield*, his corruptions at length triumphed over his convictions, and his resolutions were not strong enough to hold out against such artful attacks as these, but *with the flattery of her lips she forced him*, he could not stop his ear against such a charmer, but surrendered

rendered himself her captive. Wisdom's maidens that plead her cause, and have reason on their side, and true and divine pleasures to invite men to, have a deaf ear turned to them, and with all their rhetorick cannot compel men to come in, but such is the dominion of sin in the hearts of men, that its allurements soon prevail by falshood and flattery.

With what pity doth Solomon here look upon this foolish young man, when he sees him follow the adulterous woman. 1. He gives him up for gone, alas, he is undone. He goes to the slaughter; for houses of uncleanness are slaughter-houses to precious souls: *A dart will presently strike through his liver*; going without his breast-plate, he shall receive his death's wound, *ver. 23.* It is his life, his precious life, that is thus irrecoverably thrown away; he is perfectly lost to all good, his conscience is debauched, a door is opened to all other vices, and this will certainly end in his endless damnation. 2. That which makes his case the more piteous, is that he is not himself aware of his misery and danger; he goes blindfold, nay, he goes laughing to his ruin. The ox thinks he is led to the pasture when he is led to the slaughter; *The fool* (that is, the drunkard, for of all sinners, drunkards are the greatest fools, they wilfully turn themselves into fools) he is led to *the correction of the stocks*, and is not sensible of the shame of it, but goes to it as if he were going to a play. The *bird that hasteth to the snare*, looks only at the bait, and promiseth her self a good bit from that, and considers not that *it is for her life*. Thus this unthinking unwary young man dreams of nothing but the pleasures he shall have in the embraces of the harlot, while really he is running headlong upon his ruin. Though Solomon doth not here tell us, that he put the law in execution against this base harlot, yet we have no reason to think but that he did, he was himself so affected with the mischief she did, and had such an indignation at it.

24. ¶ Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth. 25. Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. 26. For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her. 27. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.

We have here the application of the foregoing story; *hearken to me therefore, and not to such seducers, ver. 24.* Give ear to a father, and not to an enemy.

(1.) Take good counsel when it is given you, *ver. 25.* Let not thine heart decline to her ways, never leave the paths of virtue though strait, and narrow, and solitary, up hill, for the adulterers, though green and broad, and crowded with company. Do not only keep thy feet from those ways, but let not so much as *thy heart incline* to them, never harbour a disposition this way, nor think otherwise than with abhorrence of such wicked practices as these. Let reason and conscience, and the fear of God ruling in the heart, check the inclinations of the sensual appetite. If thou *goest in her paths*, in any of the paths that lead to this sin, thou *goest astray*, thou art out of the right way, the safe way, therefore take heed, *go not astray*, lest thou wander endlessly.

(2.) Take fair warning when it is given you.

1. Look back, and see what mischief this sin has done; the adulterers has been the ruin not of here and there one, but she hath *cast down many wounded*. Thousands have been undone now, and for ever, by this sin; and those not only, the weak and simple youths, such as he was of whom he had now spoken; but *many strong men have been slain by her*, *ver. 26.* Herein, perhaps, he has an eye especially to Sampson, who was slain by this sin, and, perhaps, to David too, who by this sin entailed a sword upon his house, though so far the Lord took it away, that he himself should not die. These were men not only of great bodily strength, but of eminent wisdom and courage, and yet their fleshly lusts prevailed over them. How! fir-trees, if the cedars be shaken; *Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall.*

2. Look forward with an eye of faith, and see what will be in the end of it, *ver. 27.* Her house, though richly decked and furnished, and called a house of pleasure; is *the way to hell*, and her chambers are the stair-case that goes down to the *chambers of death*, and everlasting darkness. The cup of fornication must shortly be exchanged for the cup of trembling; and the flames of lust, if not quenched by repentance and mortification, will burn to the lowest hell. Therefore *stand in awe, and sin not.*

C H A P VIII.

The word of God is twofold, and both are wisdom; for a word without wisdom is of little value, and wisdom without a word is of little use. Now, 1. Divine revelation is the word and wisdom of God, and that pure religion and undefiled, which is built upon it; and of that Solomon here speaks, recommending it to us as faithful, and well worthy of all acceptation, *ver. 1.—21.* God by it instructs and governs, and blesses the children of men. 2. The Redeemer is the eternal word and wisdom, the logos, he is the

wisdom that speaks to the children of men, in the former part of the chapter; all divine revelation passeth through his hand, and centers in him; but of him as the personal wisdom, the second person in the God-head, in the judgment of many of the ancients, Solomon here speaks, *ver. 23.—31.* And then concludes with a repeated charge to the children of men, diligently to attend to the voice of God in his word.

1. **D**OETH not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? 2. She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths. 3. She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors. 4. Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of man. 5. O ye simple, understand wisdom; and ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart. 6. Hear, for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things. 7. For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips. 8. All the words of my mouth are in righteousness, there is nothing froward or perverse in them. 9. They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge. 10. Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. 11. For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired, are not to be compared to it.

The will of God revealed to us for our salvation, is here largely represented to us, as easy to be known and understood, that none may have an excuse for their ignorance or error, and as worthy to be embraced, that none may have an excuse for their carelessness and unbelief.

1. The things revealed are *easy to be known*, for they belong to us and to our children, *Deut. xxix. 29.* and we need soar up to heaven, or dive into the depths, to get the knowledge of them, *Deut. xxx. 11.* for they are published and proclaimed in some measure by the works of the creation, *Psal. xix. 1.* more fully by the consciences of men, and the eternal reasons and rules of good and evil, but most clearly by *Moses and the prophets*; let them hear them.

The precepts of wisdom may easily be known; for

(1.) They are proclaimed aloud, *ver. 1.* *Doth not wisdom cry?* yes, she cries aloud and *doth not spare*, *Isa. lviii. 1.* she puts forth her voice, as one in earnest, and desirous to be heard. *Jesus stood and cried*, *John vii. 37.* The curses and blessings were read with a loud voice by the Levites, *Deut. xxvii. 14.* And men's own hearts sometimes speak aloud to them; there are clamours of conscience, as well as whispers.

(2.) They are proclaimed from on high, *ver. 2.* she stands in the top of high places; it was from the top of mount Sinai that the law was given, and Christ expounded it in a sermon upon the mount. Nay, if we slight divine revelation, we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven, a high place indeed, *Heb. xii. 25.* The adulterous woman spoke in secret, the oracles of the heathen muttered; but wisdom speaks openly; truth seeks no corners, but gladly appeals to the light.

(3.) They are proclaimed in the places of concourse, where multitudes are gathered together, the more the better. *Jesus spake in the synagogues and in the temple, whither the Jews always resorted*, *John xviii. 20.* Every man that passeth by on the road, of what rank or condition soever, may know what is good, and what the Lord requires of him, if it be not his own fault. There is no speech nor language where wisdom's voice is not heard; her discoveries and directions are given to all promiscuously. *He that has ears to hear, let him hear.*

(4.) They are proclaimed there where they are most needed. They are intended for the guide of our way, and therefore are published in the places of the path, where many ways meet, that travellers may be shewed if they will but ask, which is the right way, just then when they are at a loss; *Thou shalt then hear the word behind thee, saying, this is the way*, *Isa. xxx. 31.* Foolish man knows not how to go to the city, *Eccl. x. 15.* and therefore wisdom stands ready to direct him, stands at the gates, at the entry of the city, ready to tell him where the *seer's house* is, *1 Sam. ix. 18.* Nay, she follows men to their own houses, and cries to them at the coming in at the doors, saying, *peace be to this house*; and if the son of peace be there, it shall certainly abide upon it. God's ministers are appointed to testify to people both publicly and from house to house. Their own consciences follow them with admonitions wherever they go, which they cannot be out of the hearing of, while they carry their own heads and hearts about with them, which are a law unto themselves.

(5.) They are directed to the children of men. We attend to that discourse in which we hear ourselves named, though otherwise we would have neglected it; therefore wisdom speaks to us; *Unto you, O men, I call*, *ver. 4.* not to angels, they need not these instructions; not to devils, they are past them; not to the brute creatures, they are not capable of them; but *to you, O men*, who are

are taught more than the beasts of the earth, and made wiser than the fowls of heaven. To you is this law given, to you is the word of this invitation, this exhortation sent. *My voice is to the sons of men*, that are concerned to receive instruction, and to whom one would think it should be very welcome. It is not to you, O Jews only, that wisdom cries, or to you, O gentlemen, or you, O scholars; but to you, O men, O sons of men, even the meanest.

(6.) They are designed to make them wise, *ver. 5.* they are calculated not only for men that are capable of wisdom, but for sinful men, fallen men, foolish men, that need it, and are undone without it: *O ye simple ones, understand wisdom.* Though you are never so simple, wisdom will take you for her scholars, and not only so, but if you will be ruled by her, will undertake to give you an *understanding heart*. When sinners leave their sins, and become truly religious, then the *simple understand wisdom*.

2. The things revealed are worthy to be known, well worthy of all acceptance. We are concerned to hear; for,

1. They are of inestimable value; they are *excellent things*, *ver. 6.* princely things, so the word is: Though they are level to the capacity of the meanest, yet there is that in them which will be entertainment for the greatest. They are divine and heavenly things, so excellent, that in comparison with them, all other learning is but childrens play. Things which relate to an eternal God, an immortal soul, and an everlasting state, must needs be *excellent things*.

2. They are of uncontested equity, and carry along with them the evidence of their own goodness; they are *right things*, *ver. 6.* all in righteousness, *ver. 8.* and *nothing froward or perverse in them*. All the dictates and directions of revealed religion, are consonant to, and perfective of the light and law of nature, and there is nothing in it that puts any hardship upon us, that lays us under any undue restraints, unbecoming the dignity and liberty of the human nature; nothing that we have reason to complain of; all God's precepts concerning all things are right.

3. They are of unquestionable truth; wisdom's doctrines, upon which her laws are founded, are such as we may venture our immortal souls upon: *My mouth shall speak truth*, *ver. 7.* the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, for it is a testimony to the world. Every word of God is true, there are not so much as pious frauds in it, nor are we imposed upon in that which is told us for our good. Christ is a faithful witness, is the truth itself; *wickedness*, i. e. lying, *is an abomination to his lips*. Note, Lying is wickedness, and we should not only refrain it, but it should be an abomination to us, and as far from what we say, as from what God faith to us. His word to us is *yea*, and *amen*, never then let ours be *yea and nay*.

4. They are wonderfully acceptable and agreeable to those that take them aright, that understand themselves aright, that have not their judgments blinded and biased by the world and the flesh, that are not under the power of prejudice, that are taught of God, and whose understandings he has opened; who impartially *seek knowledge*, take pains for it, and have found it in the enquiries they have hitherto made: to them (1.) They are all plain, and not hard to be understood: If the book is sealed, it is to those that are willingly ignorant: *If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost*; but to those who *depart from evil*, which is *understanding*, who have that *good understanding*, which they have that *do the commandments*, to them *they are all plain*, and there is nothing difficult in them: The way of religion is a high-way, and *the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein*, Isa. xxxv. 8. They therefore do a great wrong to the common people, who deny them the use of the scripture, under pretence that they cannot understand it, whereas it is plain for plain people. (2.) They are all *right*, and not hard to be submitted to. Those that discern things that differ, that know good and evil, readily subscribe to the rectitude of all wisdom's dictates, and therefore without murmuring or disputing govern themselves by them.

3. From all this he infers, that the right knowledge of those things, such as transforms us into the image of them, is to be preferred before all the wealth of this world, *ver. 10, 11.* *Receive my instruction, and not silver.* Instruction must not only be heard but received. We must bid it welcome, receive the impressions of it, and submit to the command of it; and this *rather than choice gold*; that is, 1. We must prefer religion before riches, and look upon it, that if we have the knowledge and fear of God in our hearts, we are really more happy, and better provided for every condition of life, than if we had never so much silver and gold. *Wisdom is*, in it self, and therefore must be in our account, *better than rubies*: It will bring us in a better price, be to us a better portion, shew it forth, and it will be a better ornament than jewels and precious stones of the greatest value. Whatever we can fit down and wish for of the wealth of this world, if we had it, it were not worthy to be compared with the advantages that attend serious godliness. 2. We must be dead to the wealth of this world, that we may the more closely and earnestly apply our selves to the business of religion. We must receive instruction as the main matter, and then be indifferent whether we receive silver or no; nay, we must not receive it as our portion and reward, as the rich man in his life-time received his good things.

12. I wisdom dwell with prudence; and find out knowledge of witty inventions. 13. The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth do I hate. 14. Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding, I have strength. 15. By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. 16. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth. 17. I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me. 18. Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness. 19. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver. 20. I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: 21. That I may cause those that love me, to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures.

Wisdom here is Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; it is Christ in the word, and Christ in the heart; not only Christ revealed to us, but Christ revealed in us. It is the word of God, the whole compass of divine revelation; it is God the Word, in whom all divine revelation centers; it is the soul formed by the Word, it is Christ formed in the soul; it is religion in the purity and power of it. Glorious things are here spoken of this excellent person, this excellent thing.

1. Divine wisdom gives men good heads, *ver. 12.* *I wisdom dwell with prudence*, not with carnal policy, the wisdom that is from above is contrary to that, 2 Cor. i. 12. but with true discretion, which serves for the right ordering of the conversation; that wisdom of the prudent which is to *understand his way*, and is in all cases *profitable to direct*; the wisdom of the serpent, not only to guard from harm, but to guide in doing good. *Wisdom dwells with prudence*; for prudence is the product of religion, and an ornament to religion; and there are more *witty inventions* found out with the help of the scripture, both for the right understanding of God's providences, and for the effectual countermining of Satan's devices, and the doing of good in our generation, than were ever discovered by the learning of the philosophers, or the politicks of statesmen. We may apply it to Christ himself; he *dwells with prudence*, for his whole undertaking is the *wisdom of God in a mystery*, and in it God *abounds towards us in all wisdom and prudence*: Christ found out the knowledge of that great invention, and a costly one it was to him, man's salvation, by his satisfaction, an admirable expedient: we had found out many inventions for our ruin, he found out one for our recovery. The covenant of grace is so well ordered in all things, that we must conclude, he that ordered it *dwell with prudence*.

2. It gives men good hearts, *ver. 13.* True religion consisting in the fear of the Lord, which is the wisdom before recommended, teacheth men, 1. To hate all sin, as displeasing to God, and destructive to the soul. *The fear of the Lord is to hate evil, the evil way*; to hate sin as sin, and therefore to *hate every false way*. Wherever there is an awe of God, there is a dread of sin, as an evil, an only evil. 2. Particularly to hate pride and passion, those two common and dangerous sins. Conceit of ourselves, *pride and arrogancy* are sins which Christ hates, and so do all those which have the Spirit of Christ; every one hates them in others, but we must hate them in ourselves. *The froward mouth*, i. e. peevishness towards others, God hates, because it is such an enemy to the peace of mankind, and therefore we should hate it. Be it spoken to the honour of religion, that however it is unjustly accused, it is so far from making men conceited and sour, that there is nothing more directly contrary to it, than pride and passion, nor which it teaches us more to detest.

3. It has a great influence upon publick affairs, and the well governing of all societies, *ver. 14.* Christ, as God, hath strength and wisdom, wisdom and might are his; as Redeemer, he is the *wisdom of God, and the power of God*. To all that are his, he is made of God both *strength and wisdom*; in him they are laid up for us, that we may both know and do our duty. He is the wonderful Counsellor, and gives that grace which alone is *sound wisdom*: He is *understanding* it self, and has *strength* for all those that strengthen themselves in him. True religion gives men the best counsel in all difficult cases, and helps to make their way plain; wherever it is it is *understanding*, it has *strength*, it will be all that to us that we need, both for services and sufferings: Where the word of God dwells richly, it makes a man *perfect*, and *furnisheth him thoroughly for every good word and work*.

Kings, and princes, and judges, have of all men most need of wisdom and strength, of counsel and courage, for the faithful discharge of the trusts reposed in them, and that they may be blessings to the people over whom they are set. And therefore wisdom saith, *By me kings reign*, *ver. 15, 16.* that is, 1. Civil government is a divine institution, and those that are intrusted with the administration of it, have their commission from Christ; it is a branch of his kingly office, that *by him kings reign*; from him, to whom all judgment is committed, their power is derived. They reign by him, and therefore ought to reign for him. 2. Whatever qualifications

cations for government any kings or princes have; they are indebted to the grace of Christ for it; he gives them the spirit of government, and they have nothing, no skill, no principles of justice, but what he endues them with. *A divine sentence is in the lips of the king*; and they are to their subjects what he makes them.

3. Religion is very much the strength and support of the civil government; it teaches subjects their duty, and so by it kings reign over them the more easily; it teaches kings their duty, and so by it kings reign as they ought; they *decree justice*, while they *rule in the fear of God*. Those rule well whom religion rules.

4. It will make all those happy, truly happy, that receive and embrace it.

1. They shall be happy in the love of Christ; for he it is that faith, *I love them that love me*, ver. 17. They that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity shall be loved of him with a peculiar distinguishing love; he will love them, and manifest himself to them.

2. They shall be happy in the success of their enquiries after him. They that seek me early, seek an acquaintance with me, and an interest in me, seek it early, i. e. seek it earnestly, seek it first before any thing else, that begin betimes in the days of their youth to seek him, they shall find what they seek; Christ shall be theirs, and they shall be his; he never said, *seek in vain*.

3. They shall be happy in the wealth of the world; or in that which is infinitely better. (1.) They shall have as much riches and honour as infinite wisdom sees good for them, ver. 18. they are with Christ, i. e. he has them to give, and whether he will see fit to give them to us must be referred to him. Religion sometimes helps to make people rich and great in the world, gains them a reputation, and so encreaseth their estate; and the riches which Wisdom gives to her favourites have these two advantages, 1. That they are riches and righteousness; i. e. riches honestly got, not by fraud and oppression, but in regular ways; and riches charitably used, for alms are called *righteousness*: Those that have their wealth from God's blessing on their industry, and that have a heart to do good with it, have *riches and righteousness*. 2. That therefore they are *durable riches*, wealth gotten by vanity will soon be diminished, but that which is well got will wear well, and will be left to the childrens children; and that which is well spent in works of piety and charity, is set out to the best interest, and so will be durable; for the friends made by the *mammon of unrighteousness*, when we fail, will receive us into everlasting habitations, Luke xvi. 9. it will be found after many days, for the days of eternity. (2.) They shall have that which is infinitely better, if they have not riches and honour in this world, ver. 19. *My fruit is better than gold*, and will turn to a better account, will be of more value in less compass, and my revenue better than the choicest silver; will serve a better trade. We may assure ourselves, that not only wisdom's products at last, but her incomes in the mean time; not only her fruit, but her revenue, is more valuable than the best, either of the possessions or of the reversions of this world.

4. They shall be happy in the grace of God now; that shall be their guide in the good way, ver. 20. This is that fruit of wisdom which is *better than gold, than fine gold*, that it leads in the way of righteousness, shews us that way, and goes before us in it; the way that God would have us walk in, and which will certainly bring us to our desired end: It leads in the midst of the paths of judgment, and saves us from deviating on either hand. *In medio virtus*. Christ by his Spirit guides believers into all truth, and so leads them in the way of righteousness; and they walk after the Spirit.

5. They shall be happy in the glory of God hereafter, ver. 21. Therefore wisdom leads in the paths of righteousness, not only that she may keep her friends in the way of duty and obedience, but that she may cause them to inherit substance, and may fill their treasures; which cannot be done with the things of this world, nor with any thing less than God and heaven. The happiness of those that love God, and devote themselves to his service, is substantial and satisfactory. 1. It is substantial, it is substance it self; it is a happiness which will subsist of it self, and stand alone, without the accidental supports of outward conveniences; spiritual and eternal things, are the only real and substantial things. Joy in God is substantial joy, solid and well grounded; the promises are their bonds, Christ is their surety, and both substantial. They inherit substance, i. e. their inheritance hereafter is substantial, it is a weight of glory, it is substance, Heb. x. 34. all their happiness they have as heirs, it is grounded upon their sonship. 2. It is satisfying; it will not only fill their hands, but fill their treasures; not only maintain them, but make them rich. The things of this world may fill mens bellies, Psalm xvii. 14. but not their treasures; for they cannot in them secure to themselves goods for many years, perhaps, they may be deprived of them this night; but let the treasures of the soul be never so capacious, there is enough in God, and Christ, and heaven, to fill them. In wisdom's promises believers have goods laid up, not for days and years, but for eternity: Her fruit therefore is better than gold.

22. The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. 23. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. 24. When there were no depths, I was brought

forth: when there were no fountains abounding with water. 25. Before the mountains were settled; before the hills was I brought forth: 26. While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. 27. When he prepared the heavens I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: 28. When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: 29. When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: 30. Then I was by him; as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him: 31. Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men.

That it is an intelligent and divine person that here speaks seems very plain, and that it is not meant of a meer essential property of the divine nature; for wisdom here has personal properties and actions; and that intelligent, divine person, can be no other but the Son of God himself; to whom the principal things here spoken of wisdom, are attributed in other scriptures, and we must explain scripture by it self. If Solomon himself designed only the praise of wisdom, as it is an attribute of God, by which he made the world, and governs it, so to recommend to men the study of that wisdom which belongs to them; yet the Spirit of God, who indited what he wrote, carried him, as David, often to such expressions, as could agree to no other but the Son of God, and would lead us into the knowledge of great things concerning him. All divine revelation is the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, and here we are told who and what he is, as God, designed in the eternal counsels to be the Mediator between God and man. The best exposition of these verses we have in the four first verses of St. John's gospel; *In the beginning was the Word*, &c.

Concerning the Son of God. Observe here,

1. His personality, and distinct subsistence; one with the Father, and of the same essence, and yet a person of himself, whom the Lord possessed, ver. 22. was set up, ver. 23. was brought forth, ver. 24, 25. was by him, ver. 30. for he was the express image of his person, Heb. i. 3.

2. His eternity; he was begotten of the Father, for the Lord possessed him, as his own Son, his beloved Son, laid him in his bosom; he was brought forth as the only begotten of the Father, and this, before all worlds; which is most largely insisted upon here. The Word was eternal, and had a being before the world, before the beginning of time; and therefore it must follow, that it was from eternity. The Lord possessed him in the beginning of his way, i. e. of his eternal counsels, for those were before his works; this way indeed had no beginning, for God's purposes in himself are eternal like himself, but God speaks to us in our own language. Wisdom explains her self, ver. 23. *I was set up from everlasting*: The Son of God was in the eternal counsels of God designed and advanced to be the wisdom and power of the Father, light and life, and all in all, both in the creation and in the redemption of the world.

That he was brought forth as to his being, and set up as to the divine counsels concerning his office before the world was made, is here set forth in a great variety of expressions, much the same with those by which the eternity of God himself is expressed, Psalm xc. 2. *Before the mountains were brought forth*. 1. *Before the earth was*, and that was made in the beginning, before man was made; therefore the second Adam had a being before the first, for the first Adam was made of the earth, the second had a being before the earth, and therefore is not of the earth, John iii. 31. 2. *Before the sea was*, ver. 24. *When there were no depths*, in which the waters were gathered together, no fountains, from which those waters might arise; none of that deep, on which the Spirit of God moved for the production of the visible creation, Gen. i. 2. 3. *Before the mountains were*, the everlasting mountains, ver. 25. Eliphaz, to convince Job of his inability to judge of the divine counsels, asks him, Job xv. 7. *Wast thou made before the hills?* no, thou wast not, but before the hills was the eternal Word brought forth. 4. *Before the habitable parts of the world*, which men cultivate, and reap the profits of, ver. 26. *the fields*, in the vallies and plains, to which the mountains are as a wall, which are the highest part of the dust of the world: The first part of the dust, so some; the atoms which compose the several parts of the world. The chief or principal part of the dust, so it may be read, and understood of man, who was made of the dust of the ground, and is dust, but is the principal part of the dust, dust enlivened, dust refined: The eternal Word had a being before man was made, for in him was the life of men.

3. His agency in making the world: He not only had a being before the world, but he was present, not as a spectator, but as the architect when the world was made. God puzzled and humbled Job, by asking him, *Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? who hath laid the measures thereof?* &c. Job

Job xxxviii. 4, &c. Wast thou that eternal Word and Wisdom, which was the prime manager of that great affair; no; thou art of yesterday: But here the Son of God referring, as it should seem, to that discourse God had with Job, declares himself to be that which Job could not pretend to be a witness of, and a worker in the creation of the world. *By him God made the worlds*, Eph. iii. 9. Heb. i. 2. Col. i. 16. 1. When on the first day of the creation, in the very beginning of time, God bespoke the light, and with a word produced it, this eternal Wisdom was that almighty Word; then *I was there, when he prepared the heavens*, the fountain of that light, which, whatever it is here, is there substantial. 2. He was no less active, when, on the second day, he stretched out the firmament, the vast expanse, and *set that as a compass upon the face of the depth*, ver. 27. surrounded it on all sides with that canopy, that curtain. Or it may refer to that exact order and method with which God framed all the parts of the universe, as the workman marks out his work with his line and compasses. The work in nothing varied from the plan of it formed in the eternal mind. 3. He was also employed in the third day's work, when *the waters above the heavens* were gathered together by the *establishing of the clouds above*, and those under the heavens, by the *strengthening of the fountains of the deep*, which send forth those waters, ver. 28. and by the preserving the bounds of the sea, which is the receptacle of those waters, ver. 29. This speaks much the honour of this eternal Wisdom, for by this instance, God proves himself a God greatly to be feared, *Jer. v. 22.* that *he hath placed the sand for the bound of the sea*, that the dry land might continue to appear above water, fit to be a habitation for man; and thus he hath *appointed the foundation of the earth*. How able, how fit is the Son of God to be the Saviour of the world, who was the Creator of it!

4. The infinite complacency which the Father had in him, and he in the Father, ver. 30. *I was by him, as one brought up with him*. As by an eternal generation he was brought forth of the Father, so by an eternal counsel he was brought up with him, which intimates, not only the infinite love of the Father to the Son, who is therefore called *the Son of his love*, Col. i. 13. but the mutual consciousness and good understanding that was between them, concerning the work of man's redemption, which the Son was to undertake, and about which the *counsel of peace was between them both*, Zech. vi. 13. He was *alumnus patris*, the Father's pupil, as I may say, trained up from eternity for that service which in time, in the fulness of time, he was to go through with, and is therein taken under the special tuition and protection of the Father; he is *my servant whom I uphold*, Isa. xlii. 1. He did what he saw the Father do, *John v. 19.* pleased his Father, sought his glory, did according to the commandment he received from his Father, and all this, *as one brought up with him*. He was *daily his Father's delight* (*mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth*, saith God, Isa. xlii. 1.) and he also *rejoiced always before him*. This may be understood, either, 1. Of the infinite delight which the persons of the blessed Trinity have in each other, wherein consists much of the happiness of the divine nature. Or, 2. Of the pleasure which the Father took in the operations of the Son when he *made the world*; God saw every thing that the Son made, and, *behold, it was very good*, it pleased him, and therefore his Son was *daily*, day by day, during the six days of the creation, upon that account, *his delight*; allude to *Exod. xxxix. 43.* And the Son also did himself *rejoice before him*, in the beauty and harmony of the whole creation, *Psalms civ. 31.* Or, 3. Of the satisfaction they had in each other, with reference to the great work of man's redemption. The Father delighted in the Son, as Mediator between him and man, was well pleased with what he proposed, *Matt. iii. 17.* and therefore loved him, because he undertook to *lay down his life for the sheep*; he put a confidence in him that he would go through his work, and not fail or fly off: The Son also *rejoiced always before him*, delighted to do his will, *Psalms xl. 8.* stuck close to his undertaking, as one that was well satisfied in it, and when it came to the setting to, expressed as much satisfaction in it as ever, saying, *Lo I come, to do as in the volume of the book it is written of me*.

5. The gracious concern he had for mankind, ver. 31. Wisdom *rejoiced*, not so much in the rich products of the earth, or the treasures hid in the bowels of it, as *in the habitable parts of it*, for her *delights were with the sons of men*; not only in the creation of man, it is spoken with a peculiar air of pleasure, *Gen. i. 26.* *Let us make man*; but in the redemption and salvation of man. The Son of God was *ordained before the world* to that great work, *1 Pet. i. 20.* A remnant of the sons of men were given him to be brought through his grace to his glory, and those were they in whom his delights were; his church was the habitable part of his earth, made habitable for him, *that the Lord God might dwell even among them* that had been rebellious; and this he rejoiced in, in the prospect of seeing his seed. Though he foresaw all the difficulties he was to meet with in his work, the services and sufferings he was to go through, yet because it would issue in the glory of his Father, and the salvation of those sons of men that were given him, he looked forward upon it with the greatest satisfaction imaginable, in which we have all the encouragement we can desire to come to him, and rely upon him for all the benefits designed us by that glorious undertaking of his.

32. Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways. 33. Hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not. 34. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. 35. For whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD. 36. But he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me, love death.

We have here the application of wisdom's discourse; the design and tendency of it, is to bring us all into all intire subjection to the laws of religion, to make us wise and good; not to fill our heads with speculations, or our tongues with disputes, but to rectify what is amiss in our hearts and lives. In order to this here is,

(1.) An exhortation to hear and obey the voice of wisdom; to attend and comply with the good instructions that the word of God gives us, and in them to discern the voice of Christ, as the sheep know the shepherd's voice.

1. We must be diligent *hearers of the word*; for how can we believe in him of whom we have not heard; *hearken unto me, O ye children*, ver. 32. read the word written, sit under the word preached, bless God for both, and hear him in both speaking to you. Let children in age hearken, for it is their learning age, and what they hearken to then, it is likely, they will be so seasoned by, as to be governed by all their days. Let children, in relation, hearken to God as their father, to wisdom as their mother, to whom they ought to be in subjection and live; let wisdom's children justify wisdom by hearkening to her, and shew themselves to be indeed her children.

We must hear wisdom's words, 1. Submissively, and with a willing heart, ver. 33. *Hear instruction, and refuse it not*, either as that which you need not, or as that which you like not; it is offered you as a kindness, and it is at your peril if you refuse it; they that reject the counsel of God, reject it against themselves, *Luke vii. 30.* Refuse it not now, lest you have not another offer. 2. Constantly, and with an attentive ear: We must hear wisdom so as to *watch daily at her gates*, as beggars to receive alms, as clients and patients to receive advice, and to wait as servants with humility and patience, and ready observance at the posts of her doors. See here what a good house wisdom keeps, for every day is dole day; what a good school, for every day is lecture day: While we have God's works before our eyes, and his word in our hand, we may be every day hearing wisdom, and learning instruction from her. See here what a dutiful and diligent attendance is required of all Christ's disciples; they must *watch at his gates*. (1.) We must lay hold on all opportunities of getting knowledge and grace, and must get into, and keep in a constant settled course of communion with God. (2.) We must be very humble in our attendance on divine instructions, and be glad of any place, even the meanest, so we may but be within hearing of them; as David, who would gladly be a door-keeper in the house of God. (3.) We must raise our expectations of these instructions, and hearken to them with care, and patience, and perseverance; must watch and wait; as Christ's hearers, that *hanged on him* to hear him, as the word in the original is, *Luke xix. 48.* And chap. xxi. 38. *Come early in the morning to hear him*.

2. We must be conscientious *doers of the work*, for we are *blessed only in our deed*. It is not enough to hearken unto wisdom's words, but we must *keep her ways*, ver. 32. i. e. do every thing that she prescribes; keep within the hedges of her ways, and not transgress them; keep in the tracks of her ways, proceed and persevere in them. *Hear instruction and be wise*, let it be a means to make you wise in ordering your conversation. What we know is known in vain, if it do not make us wise, ver. 33.

(2.) An assurance of happiness to all those that do hearken to wisdom. They are blessed, ver. 32. And again, ver. 34. They are blessed that watch and wait at wisdom's gates, even their attendance there is their happiness; it is the best place they can be in; they are blessed that wait there, for they shall not be put to wait long, let them continue to knock a while, and it shall be opened to them. They are seeking wisdom, and they shall find what they seek; but will it make amends if they do find it? Yes, ver. 35. *Whoso findeth me findeth life*, i. e. all happiness, all that good which he needs, or can desire. He finds life in that grace, which is the principle of spiritual life, and the pledge of eternal life. He *findeth life*, for he shall *obtain favour of the Lord*, and in his *favour is life*. If the king's favour is towards a wise son, much more the favour of the King of kings. Christ is wisdom, and he that findeth Christ, that obtaineth an interest in him, he *findeth life*; for Christ is life to all believers, *he that hath the Son of God hath life*, eternal life, and he shall *obtain favour of the Lord*, who is well pleased with all those that are in Christ, nor can we obtain God's favour, unless we find Christ, and be found in him.

(3.) The doom cast upon all those that reject wisdom and her proposals, ver. 36. They are left to ruin themselves, and wisdom will not hinder them, because they have set at nought all her counsel. 1. Their crime is very great, they *sin against wisdom*, rebel

rebel against its light and laws, thwart its designs, and by their folly offend it; they *sin against Christ*, they act in contempt of his authority, and in contradiction to all the purposes of his life and death. This is construed hating wisdom, hating Christ; they are his enemies, who will not have him to reign over them. What can appear worse than hating him, who is the centre of all beauty, and fountain of all goodness, love itself? 2. Their punishment will be very just, for they wilfully bring it upon themselves. (1.) They that offend Christ do the greatest wrong to themselves, they *wrong their own souls*, they wound their own consciences, bring a blot and stain upon their souls, which renders them odious in the eyes of God, and unfit for communion with him; they deceive themselves, disturb themselves, destroy themselves; sin is a wrong to the soul. (2.) They that are at variance with Christ are in love with their own ruin, *they that hate me love death*; they love that which will be their death, and put that from them which would be their life. Sinners die because they will die, which leaves them inexcusable, makes their condemnation the more intolerable, and will for ever justify God when he judgeth. *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thy self.*

C H A P. IX.

Christ and sin are rivals for the soul of man, and here we are told how they both make their court to it, to have the innermost and uppermost place in it. And the design of this representation is to set before us life and death, good and evil; and there needs no more but a fair stating of the case, to determine us which of those to choose, and surrender our hearts to. They are both brought in making entertainment for the soul, and inviting it to accept of the entertainment; concerning both we are told what the issue will be: and the matter being thus laid before us, let us consider, take advice, and speak our minds. And we are therefore concerned to put a value upon our own souls, because we see there is such striving for them. 1. Christ under the name of wisdom, invites us to accept of his entertainment, and so to enter into acquaintance and communion with him, ver. 1,—6. And having foretold the different success of his invitation, ver. 7,—9. He shews, in short, what he requires from us, ver. 10. And what he designs for us, ver. 11. And then leaves it to our choice what we will do, ver. 12. 2. Sin under the character of a foolish woman, courts us to accept of her entertainment, ver. 13,—16. Pretends it is very charming, ver. 17. But Solomon tells what the reckoning will be, ver. 18. And now choose you this day whom you will close with.

1. **W**isdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars. 2. She hath killed her beasts, she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. 3. She hath sent forth her maidens, she crieth upon the highest places of the city. 4. Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him. 5. Come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. 6. Forake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding. 7. He that reproveth a scorner, getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man, getteth himself a blot. 8. Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee. 9. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning. 10. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding. 11. For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased. 12. If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thy self: but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.

Wisdom is here introduced as a magnificent queen, very great, and very generous; that Word of God is this wisdom, in which God makes known his good-will towards men; God the Word is this wisdom, to whom the Father has committed all judgment. He that in the chapter before shewed his grandeur and glory, as the creator of the world, here shews his grace and goodness as the redeemer of it. The word is plural, to wisdoms; for in Christ are hid treasures of wisdom, and in his undertaking appears the manifold wisdom of God in a mystery. Now, observe here,

1. The rich provision which wisdom hath made for the reception of all those that will be her disciples. This is represented under the similitude of a sumptuous feast, from whence, it is probable, our Saviour borrowed those parables, in which he compared the kingdom of heaven to a great supper, *Matth. xxvii. 2. Luke xiv. 16.* And so it was prophesied of, *Isa. xxv. 6.* It is such a feast as Abasuerus made to shew the riches of his glorious kingdom. The grace of the gospel is thus set before us in the ordinance of the Lord's supper. To bid her guests welcome,

(1.) Here is a stately palace provided, *ver. 1.* wisdom not finding a house capacious enough for all her guests, has built one on purpose, and both to strengthen it, and to beautify it, she has *hewn out her seven pillars*, which make it to be very firm, and look very great. Heaven is the house which wisdom has built to entertain all her guests that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb; that is her Father's house, where there are many mansions, and whither she is gone to prepare places for us. She has hanged the earth upon nothing, therefore in it we have no continuing city, but heaven is a city that has foundations, has pillars. The church is wisdom's house, to which she invites her guests, supported by the power and promise of God, as by *seven pillars*. Probably, Solomon refers to the temple which he himself had lately built for the service of religion, and to which he would persuade people to resort, both to worship God, and to receive the instructions of wisdom. Some reckon the schools of the prophets to be here intended.

(2.) Here is a splendid feast got ready, *ver. 2.* *She hath killed her beasts, she hath mingled her wine*; plenty of meat and drink are provided, and all of the best. *She hath killed her sacrifice*, so the Word is, it is a sumptuous, but a sacred feast, a feast upon a sacrifice. Christ has offered up himself a sacrifice for us, and it is *his flesh* that is *meat indeed*, and *his blood* that is *drink indeed*: The Lord's supper is a feast of reconciliation and joy upon the sacrifice of atonement. The wine is *mingled* with something richer than it self, to give it a more than ordinary Spirit and flavour. *She has compleatly furnished her table* with all the satisfactions that a soul can desire. Righteousness and grace, peace and joy, the assurances of God's love, the consolations of the spirit, and all the pledges and earnest of eternal life. Observe, It is all wisdom's own doings; *she hath killed the beasts, she has mingled the wine*. Which notes both the love of Christ, who makes the provision, he doth not leave it to others, but takes the doing of it into his own hands; and the excellency of the preparation. That must needs be exactly fitted to answer the end, which wisdom her self has the fitting up of.

2. The gracious invitation she has given, not to some particular friends, but to all in general to come and take part of these provisions. (1.) She employs her servants to invite round about in the country, *she has sent forth her maidens*, ver. 3. The ministers of the gospel are commissioned and commanded to give notice of the preparations which God has made in the everlasting covenant, for all those that are willing to come up to the terms of it; and they, with maiden purity, not corrupting themselves or the word of God, and with an exact observance of their lady's orders, are to call upon all they meet with, even in *high-ways and the hedges*, to come and feast with wisdom, *for all things are now ready*, Luke xiv. 23. (2.) She her self *cries upon the highest places of the city*, as one earnestly desirous of the welfare of the children of men, and grieved to see them rejecting their own mercies for lying vanities. Our Lord Jesus was himself the publisher of his own gospel, when he had sent forth his disciples, he followed them to confirm what they said; nay, it *began to be spoken by the Lord*, Heb. ii. 3. He stood and cried, *come unto me*.

We see who invites, now let us observe,

(1.) To whom the invitation is given. *Whoso is simple, and wants understanding*, ver. 4. If we were to make an entertainment, of all people we would not care for, much less court the company of such, but rather of philosophers and learned men, that we might hear their wisdom, and whose table-talk would be improving; have I need of mad-men? But wisdom invites such, because what she has to give, is what they most need, and it is their welfare that she consults and aims at, in the preparation and invitation. He that is simple is invited, that he may be made wise; and he that wants a heart, so the word is, let him come hither and he shall have one. Her preparations are rather physick than food, designed for the most valuable and desirable cure, that of the mind. Whosoever he be, the invitation is general, and excludes none that do not exclude themselves; though they be never so foolish, yet, 1. They shall be welcome. 2. They may be helped, they shall neither be despised, nor despaired of. Our Saviour came, *not to call the righteous but sinners*; not the wise in their own eyes, who say they see, *John ix. 41.* But the simple, *i. e.* those that are sensible of their simplicity, and ashamed of it, and him that is willing to *become a fool that he may be wise*, 1 Cor. iii. 18.

(2.) What the invitation is. 1. We are invited to wisdom's house, *turn in hither*; I say we are, for which of us is there that must not own the character of the invited, that are *simple, and want understanding*, wisdom's doors stand open to such, and she is desirous to have some talk with them, one word for their own good, nor hath she any other design upon them. 2. We are invited to her table, *ver. 5. come, eat of my bread*, *i. e.* taste of the true pleasures that are to be found in the knowledge and fear of God. By faith acted on the promises of the gospel, applying them to our selves, and taking the comfort of them, we feed, we feast upon the provisions Christ has made for poor souls. What we eat and drink we make our own, and are nourished and refreshed by it, and so are our souls by the word of God; it has that in it that is *meat and drink* to those that understand themselves.

(3.) What is required of those that may have the benefit of this invitation,

invitation, *ver. 6.* 1. They must break off from all bad company; *for sake the foolish*, converse not with them, conform not to their ways, have no fellowship with the works of darkness, or with those that deal in such works. The first step towards virtue is to shun vice, and therefore to shun the vicious: *Depart from me, ye evil doers.* 2. They must awake and arise from the dead; they must live, not in pleasure, for those that do so are dead while they live, but in the service of God, for those only that do so live indeed, live to some purpose. Live not a meer animal life, as brutes, but now, at length, live the life of men. *Live and you shall live*, live spiritually, and you shall live eternally, *Eph. v. 14.* 3. They must choose the paths of wisdom, and keep to them. *Go in the way of understanding*, i. e. govern thy self from henceforward by the rules of religion and right reason. It is not enough to *for sake the foolish*, but we must join ourselves with those that walk in wisdom, and walk in the same spirit and steps.

3. The instructions which wisdom gives to the maidens, she sends to invite, to the ministers and others, that in their places are endeavouring to serve her interests and designs. She tells them, 1. What their work must be; not only to tell in general what preparation is made for souls, and to give a general offer of it, but they must apply themselves to particular persons; must tell them of their faults, *reprove, rebuke*, *ver. 7, 8.* They must instruct them how to amend, *teach*, *ver. 9.* The word of God is intended, and therefore so is the ministry of that word *for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.* 2. What different sorts of persons they would meet with, and what course they must take with them, and what success they might expect.

(1.) They would meet with some *scorners* and *wicked men*, that would mock the messengers of the Lord, and misuse them, would *laugh them to scorn* that invite them to the feast of the Lord, as they did, *2 Chron. xxx. 10.* would *treat them spitefully*, *Matth. xxii. 6.* And though they are not forbidden to invite these simple ones to wisdom's house, yet they are advised not to pursue the invitation, by reproving and rebuking them; *reprove not a scorner, cast not these pearls before swine*, *Matth. vii. 6.* Thus Christ said of the Pharisees, *Let them alone*, *Matth. xv. 14.* Do not reprove them. 1. In justice to them, for they have forfeited the favour of further means, who scorn the means they have had. They that are thus *filthy*, *let them be filthy still*; that are *joynd to idols*, *let them alone*; *so we turn to the Gentiles.* 2. In prudence to your selves; because if you reprove them, 1. You lose your labour, and so *get to your selves shame* for the disappointment. 2. You exasperate them, do it never so wisely and tenderly, if you do it faithfully they will hate you, they will load you with reproaches, and say all the ill they can of you, and so you will get a blot; therefore you had better not meddle with them, for your reproofs will be likely to do more hurt than good.

(2.) They would meet with others that are wise, and good, and just; thanks be to God, all are not scorners. We meet with some that are so wise for themselves, so just to themselves as to be willing and glad to be taught, and when we meet with such, 1. If there be occasion we must reprove them; for wise men are not so perfectly wise, but there is that in them which needs a reproof; and we must not connive at any man's faults, because we have a veneration for his wisdom; nor must a *wise man* think that his wisdom exempts him from reproof, when he saith or doth any thing foolishly; but the more wisdom a man has, the more desirous he should be to have his weaknesses shewed him, because a *little folly* is a great blemish to him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour. 2. With our reproofs we must give them instruction, and must teach them, *ver. 9.* 3. We may expect that it will be taken as a kindness, *Psal. cxli. 5.* A wise man will reckon those his friends that deal faithfully with him, rebuke such a one, and *he will love thee* for thy plain dealing, will thank thee, and desire thee to do him the same good turn another time, if there be occasion. It is as great an instance of wisdom to take a reproof well, as to give it well. 4. Being taken well it will do good, and answer the intention. A *wise man* will be made wiser by the reproofs and instructions that are given him, he will *increase in learning*, will grow in knowledge, and so grow in grace. None must think themselves too wise to learn, or so good that they need not be better, and therefore need not be taught. We must still press forward, and follow on to know till we come to the perfect man. *Give to a wise man*, so it is in the original, give him advice, give him reproof, give him comfort, and *he will be yet wiser*; *give him occasion*, so the Seventy, occasion to shew his wisdom, and he will shew it, and the acts of wisdom will strengthen the habits.

4. The instructions she gives to those that are invited, which her maidens must inculcate upon them.

1. Let them know wherein true wisdom doth consist, and what will be their entertainment at wisdom's table, *ver. 10.* (1.) The heart must be principled with *the fear of God*, that is the beginning of wisdom. A reverence of God's majesty, and a dread of his wrath, is that fear of him which is the beginning, the first step towards true religion, whence all other instances of it take rise. This fear may at first have torment, but love will, by degrees, cast out the torment of it. (2.) The head must be filled with the knowledge of the things of God; *The knowledge of holy things* (the word

is plural) *is understanding*; the things pertaining to the service of God (those are called holy things) that pertain to our own sanctification; reproof is called *that which is holy*, *Matt. vii. 6.* Or the knowledge which holy men have, which was taught by the holy prophets, of those things which *holy men spake as they were moved by the holy Ghost*; this is *understanding*, it is the best and most useful understanding, will stand us in most stead, and turn to the best account.

2. Let them know what will be the advantages of this wisdom, *ver. 11.* *By me thy days shall be multiplied*: It will contribute to the health of thy body, and so *the years of thy life on earth shall be increased*, while mens folly and intemperance shorten their days: It will bring thee to heaven, and there thy days shall be multiplied *in infinitum*, and the *years of thy life shall be increased without end*. There is no true wisdom but in the way of religion, and no true life but in the end of that way.

3. Let them know what will be the consequence of their choosing or refusing this fair offer, *ver. 12.* Here is, 1. The happiness of those that embrace it. *If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thy self*; thou wilt be the gainer by it, not wisdom; a man cannot be profitable to God; it is to our own good that we are thus courted: Thou wilt not leave the gain to others, as we do our worldly wealth when we die, which is therefore called another man's, *Luke xvi. 12.* but thou shalt carry it with thee into another world. Those that are wise for their souls are wise for themselves, for the soul is the man: Nor do any consult their own true interest but those that are truly religious. This recommends us to God, and recovers us from that which is our folly and degeneracy; it employs us in that which is most beneficial in this world, and entitles us to that which is much more so in the world to come. 2. The shame and ruin of those that slight it: *If thou scornest wisdom's proffer, thou alone shalt bear it*, i. e. (1.) Thou shalt bear the blame of it; those that are good must thank God, but those that are wicked may thank themselves. It is not long of God, he is not the author of sin; Satan can only tempt, he cannot force; and wicked companions are but his instruments; so that all the fault must lie on the sinner himself. (2.) Thou shalt bear the loss of that which thou scornest, it will be to thine own destruction, and thy blood will be upon thine own head. And the consideration of this will aggravate thy condemnation; *Son, remember*, that thou hadst this fair offer made thee, and thou wouldst not accept of it; thou stoodst fair for life, but didst choose death rather.

§ 13. A foolish woman is clamorous; *she is simple*, and knoweth nothing. 14. For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city, 15. To call passengers who go right on their ways. 16. Whoso is simple, let him turn hither: and as for him that waiteth understanding, she saith to him, 17. Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. 18. But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell.

We have heard what Christ has to say to engage our affections to God and godliness, and one would think the whole world should go after him; but here we are told how industrious the tempter is to seduce unwary souls into the paths of sin, and with the most he gains his point, and Wisdom's courtship is not effectual. Now observe,

1. Who is the tempter, a *foolish woman*; folly her self, in opposition to wisdom. Carnal, sensual pleasure I take to be especially meant by this *foolish woman*, *ver. 13.* for that is the great enemy to virtue, and inlet to vice; that defiles and debaucheth the mind, stupifies conscience, and puts out the sparks of conviction more than any thing else. This tempter is here described to be, (1.) Very ignorant; *she is simple, and knows nothing*, i. e. she has no sufficient, solid reason to offer; where she gets dominion in a soul, she works out all the knowledge of holy things, they are lost and forgotten. *Whoredom and wine, and new wine, take away the heart*, they besot men, and make fools of them. (2.) Very importunate: The less she has to offer that is rational, the more violent and pressing she is, and carries the day many a time by dint of impudence: She is *clamorous* and noisy, *ver. 13.* continually haunting young people with her enticements. *She sits at the door of her house*, *ver. 14.* watching for a prey; not as Abraham at his tent-door, seeking an opportunity to do good: *She sits on a seat (on a throne, so the word signifies) in the high places of the city*, as if she had authority to give law; and we were all *debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh*; and as if she had reputation, and were in honour, and thought worthy of *the high places of the city*, and, perhaps, she gains upon many, more by pretending to be fashionable, than by pretending to be agreeable. Do not all persons of rank and figure in the world (saith she) give themselves a greater liberty than the strict laws of virtue allow; and why shouldst thou sneak so far as to be cramped by them? Thus the tempter affects to seem both kind and great.

2. Who are the tempted; young people that have been well educated; these she will triumph most in being the ruin of. Observe,

serve, 1. What their real character is; they are *passengers that go right on their ways*, ver. 15. that have been trained up in the paths of religion and virtue, and set out very hopefully and well; that seem determined and designed for good, and are not (as that young man, chap. vii. 8.) *going the way to her house*: Such as these she has a design upon, and lays snares for, and useth all her arts, all her charms to pervert them; if they *go right on*, and will not look towards her, she will call after them; so urgent are these temptations. 2. How she represents them; she calls them *simple*, and *wanting understanding*, and therefore courts them to her school, that they may be cured of the restraints and formalities of their religion. This is the method of the stage (which is too close an exposition of this paragraph) where the sober young man, that has been virtuously educated, is the fool in the play, and the plot is to make him *seven times more a child of hell* than his profane companions, under colour of polishing and refining him, and setting him up for a wit and a beau. What is justly charged upon sin and impiety, ver. 4. that it is folly, is here very unjustly retorted upon the ways of virtue; but the day will declare who are the fools.

3. What the temptation is, ver. 17. *Stolen waters are sweet*: It is water and bread; whereas Wisdom invites to the beasts she has killed, and the wine she has mingled: however, bread and water are acceptable enough to those that are hungry and thirsty; and this is pretended to be more than ordinary *sweet and pleasant*; for it is *stolen water, and bread eaten in secret*, with a fear of being discovered. The pleasures of prohibited lusts are boasted of as more relishing than those of prescribed love; and dishonest gain preferred before that which is justly gotten. Now this argues, not only a bold contempt, but an impudent defiance, 1. Of God's law, in that the waters are the sweeter for being stolen, and come at by breaking through the hedge of the divine command. *Nititur in vetitum*. This spirit of contradiction we have, by kind, from our first parents, who thought the forbidden tree, of all other, *a tree to be desired*. 2. Of God's curse: The *bread is eaten in secret*, for fear of discovery and punishment, and the sinner takes a pride in having so far baffled his convictions, and triumphed over them, that, notwithstanding that fear, he dares commit the sin; and can make himself believe, that, being eaten in secret, it shall never be discovered or reckoned, for sweetness and pleasantness is the bait; but by the tempter's own shewing, even that is so absurd, and hath such allays, that it is a wonder how it can have any influence upon men that pretend to reason.

4. An effectual antidote against the temptation in a few words, ver. 18. He that so far wanteth understanding as to be drawn aside by these enticements, he is led on ignorantly to his own inevitable ruin; *he knows not*, will not believe, doth not consider, the tempter will not let him know, *that the dead are there*; that those that live in pleasure are *dead while they live, dead in trespasses and sins*: Terrors attend these pleasures like the terrors of death it self. The giants are there, *Rephaim*; this was it that ruined the sinners of the old world; the giants that were in the earth in those days. *Her guests* that are treated with these *stolen waters*, are not only in the high-way to hell, and at the brink of it, but they are already in the depths of hell, under the power of sin, led captive by Satan at his will; lashed by the terrors of their own consciences now and then, which are a hell upon earth. The depths of Satan are the depths of hell; remorseless sin is remediless ruin, it is the bottomless pit already. Thus doth Solomon shew the hook, those that believe him will not meddle with the bait.

C H A P. X.

Hitherto we have been in the porch or preface to the Proverbs, here they begin; they are short but weighty sentences, most of them are distichs, two sentences in one verse, illustrating each other; but it is seldom that there is any coherence between the verses, much less any thread of discourse, and therefore in these chapters we need not attempt to reduce the contents to their proper heads, the several sentences will appear best in their own places: The scope of them all is to set before us good and evil, the blessing and the curse. Many of the proverbs in this chapter relate to the good government of the tongue, without which mens religion is vain.

1. **T**HE proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father; but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.

Solomon speaking to us as unto children, observes here how much the comfort of parents, natural, political, and ecclesiastical, depends upon the good behaviour of those under their charge, as a reason, 1. Why parents should be careful to give their children a good education, and to train them up in the ways of religion, which, if it obtain the desired effect, they themselves will have the comfort of it, or if not, they will have for their support under their heaviness, that they have done their duty, have done their endeavour. 2. Why children should carry themselves wisely and well, and live up to their good education, that they may rejoice the hearts of their parents, and not sadden them. Observe, (1.) It adds to the comfort of young people that are pious and discreet,

that thereby they do something towards recompensing their parents for all the care and pains they have taken with them, and occasion pleasure to them in the evil days of old age, when they most need it: And it is the duty of parents to rejoice in their childrens wisdom and well doing, yea, though it arrive to such an eminency as to eclipse them. (2.) It adds to the guilt of those that carry themselves ill, that thereby they grieve those whom they ought to be a joy to, and are a heaviness, particularly to their poor mothers that bore them with sorrow, but with greater sorrow to see them wicked and vile.

2. Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death. 3. The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked.

These two verses speak to the same purpose, and the latter may be the reason of the former.

1. That wealth which men get unjustly, will do them no good, because God will blast it. *Treasures of wickedness profit nothing*, ver. 2. not the treasures of wicked people; much less the treasures which they have made themselves masters of by any wicked arts, by oppression or fraud; though it be never so much, as a treasure, and laid up never so safe, though it be hid treasure, yet it *profits nothing*; when profit and loss come to be balanced, the profit gained by the treasures will by no means countervail the loss sustained by the wickedness, *Matt. xvi. 26*. They do not profit the soul, they will not purchase any true comfort or happiness; they will stand a man in no stead at death, or in the judgment of the great day; and the reason is, because God *casteth away the substance of the wicked*, ver. 3. he takes that from them which they have unjustly gotten; he rejects the consideration of it, not regarding the rich more than the poor. We often see that scattered by the justice of God, which has been gathered together by the injustice of men. How can the treasures of wickedness profit, when, though it be counted substance, God casts it away, and it vanisheth as a shadow.

2. That which is honestly got will turn to a good account, for God will bless it. *Righteousness delivers from death*, i. e. wealth gained, and kept, and used in a right manner, (righteousness signifies both honesty and charity) it answers the end of wealth, which is to keep us alive, and be a defence to us; it will deliver from those judgments which men bring upon themselves by their wickedness: It will profit to that degree, as to deliver, though not from the stroke of death, yet from the sting of it, and consequently from the terror of it: For *the Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish*, ver. 3. and so their *righteousness delivers from death*, purely by the favour of God to them, which is their life, and livelihood, and which will keep them alive in famine. The soul of the righteous shall be kept alive by the word of God, and faith in his promise, when *young lions shall lack and suffer hunger*.

4. He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.

We are here told, 1. Who they are that, though rich, are in a fair way to become poor; those that *deal with a slack hand*, that are careless and remiss in their business, and never mind which end goes foremost, nor ever set their bones to their work, or stick to it; *that deal with a deceitful hand*, so it may be read; those that think to enrich themselves by fraud and tricking, will in the end impoverish themselves, not only by bringing the curse of God on what they have, but by forfeiting their reputation with men; none will care to deal with those that deal with slight of hand, and are honest only with good looking to. 2. Who they are that though poor, are in a fair way to become rich; those that are diligent, and honest, that are careful about their affairs, and what their hands find to do, do it with all their might, in a fair and honourable way, those are likely to increase what they have. *The hand of the acute*, so some; of those that are sharp, but not sharpeners; *the hand of the active*, so others; the stirring hand gets a penny. This is true in the affairs of our souls, as well as in our worldly affairs; slothfulness and hypocrisy lead to spiritual poverty; but those that are *fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*, are likely to be *rich in faith, and rich in good works*.

5. He that gathereth in summer, is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest, is a son that causeth shame.

Here is, 1. The just praise of those that improve their opportunities, that take pains to gather, and increase what they have, both for soul and body; that provide for hereafter, while provision is to be made; that *gather in summer*, which is gathering time, he that doth so is *a wise son*, and it is his honour; he acts wisely for his parents, whom, if there be occasion, he ought to maintain, and he gives reputation to himself, his family, and his education.

2. The just reproach and blame of those that trifle away these opportunities: *He that sleeps*, loves his ease, idles away his time, and neglects his work, especially, *that sleeps in harvest*, when he should

should be laying in for winter, that lets slip the season of furnishing himself with that which he will have occasion for, he is a son that causeth shame; for he is a foolish son, he prepares shame for himself when winter comes, and reflects shame upon all his friends. He that gets knowledge and wisdom in the days of his youth, gathers in summer, and he will have the comfort and credit of it; but he that idles away the days of his youth, will bear the shame of it when he is old.

6. Blessings are upon the head of the just: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

Here is, 1. The head of the just crowned with blessings; with the blessings both of God and man; variety of blessings, abundance of blessings shall descend from above, and visibly abide on the head of good men; real blessings; they shall not only be spoken well of, but done well to. Blessings shall be on their head as a coronet to adorn and dignify them, and as a helmet to protect and secure them.

2. The mouth of the wicked covered with violence; their mouths shall be stoppt with shame for the violence which they have done; they shall not have a word to say in excuse for themselves, Job v. 16. their breath shall be stoppt with the violence that shall be done to them, when their violent dealings shall return on their heads, shall be returned to their teeth.

7. The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot.

Both the just and the wicked, when their days are fulfilled, must die; between their bodies in the grave there is no visible difference; between the souls of the one and the other in the world of spirits there is a vast difference; and so there is, or ought to be, between their memories that survive them.

1. Good men are, and ought to be, well spoken of when they are gone; it is one of the blessings that comes upon the head of the just, even when their head is laid. Blessed men leave behind them blessed memories. 1. It is part of the dignity of the saints, especially those that excel in virtue, and are eminently useful, that they are remembered with respect when they are dead; their good name, their name with good men, for good things is then in a special manner as precious ointment, Eccles. vii. 1. Those that honour God, he will thus honour, Psalm cxii. 3, 6, 9. The elders by faith obtained a good report, Heb. xi. 2. and being dead, are yet spoken of. 2. It is part of the duty of the survivors. Let the memory of the just be blessed, so the Jews read it; and observe it as a precept, not naming an eminently just man that is dead, but they add, Let his memory be blessed. We must delight in making an honourable mention of good men that are gone; bless God for them, and for his gifts and graces that appeared in them; and especially be followers of them in that which is good.

2. Bad men are and shall be forgotten, or spoken of with contempt. When their bodies are putrifying in the grave, their names also shall rot: Either they shall not be preserved at all, but buried in oblivion; no good can be said of them, and therefore the greatest kindness that can be done them, will be to say nothing of them; or they shall be lothesome, and mentioned with detestation; and that rule of honour, De mortuis nil nisi bonum, will not protect them: Where the wickedness has been notorious, and cannot but be mentioned, it ought to be mentioned with abhorrence.

8. The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall.

Here is, 1. The honour and happiness of the obedient; they will receive commandments; they will take it as a privilege, and really an ease to them to be under government, which saves them the labour of deliberating, and choosing for themselves; and they will take it as a favour to be told their duty, and admonished concerning it: And it is their wisdom, they are wise in heart that are tractable; and those who thus bend, thus stoop, they shall stand, and be established, shall prosper, being well advised.

2. The shame and ruin of the disobedient, that will not be governed, nor endure any yoke; that will not be taught, nor take any advice: They are fools, for they act against themselves, and their own interest; they are commonly prating fools, fools of lips, full of talk, but full of nonsense; boasting of themselves, prating spitefully against those that admonish them, 3 John 10. and are pretending to give counsel and law to others. Of all fools, none more troublesome than the prating fools; nor that more expose themselves: but they shall fall into sin, into hell, because they received not commandments. They that are full of tongue seldom look well to their feet, and therefore stumble and fall.

9. He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known.

We are here told, and we may depend upon it,

1. That mens integrity will be their security. He that walketh

uprightly, towards God and man, is faithful to both, that designs as he ought, and means as he saith, he walketh surely, i. e. he is safe under a divine protection, and easy in a holy security: He goes on his way with a humble boldness, being well armed against the temptations of Satan, the troubles of the world, and the reproaches of men. He knows what ground he stands on, what guide he follows, what guard he is surrounded with, and what glory he is going to, and therefore proceeds with assurance and great peace, Isa. xxxii. 17. xxxiii. 15, 16. Some understand it as part of the character of an upright man, that he walks surely, in opposition to walking at all adventures; he will not dare to do that which he is not fully satisfied in his own conscience concerning the lawfulness of, but will see his way clear in every thing.

2. That mens dishonesty will be their shame. He that perverteth his way, that turns aside into crooked paths, that dissembles with God and man, looks one way, and rows another, though he may for a time disguise himself, and pass current, he shall be known to be what he is; it is a thousand to one but some time or other he betrays himself: however, God will discover him in the great day. He that perverteth his ways, documento erit, shall be made an example of, for warning to others, so some.

10. He that winketh with the eye, causeth sorrow: but a prating fool shall fall.

Mischief is here said to attend,

1. Politick, designing, self-disguising sinners: He that winks with the eye, as if he took no notice of you, when at the same time he is watching an opportunity to do you an ill turn; that makes signs to his accomplices when to come in to assist him in executing his wicked projects, which are all carried on by trick and artifice, he causeth sorrow, both to others and to himself. Ingenuity will be no excuse for iniquity, but the sinner must either repent, or do worse; either rue it, or be ruined by it.

2. Publick, silly, self-exposing sinners, prating fools, whose sins go before unto judgment, they shall fall, as he had said before, ver. 8. But his case is less dangerous of the two, and, though he destroy himself, doth not create so much sorrow to others, as he that winks with his eyes. The dog that bites, is not always the dog that barks.

11. The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

See here, 1. How industrious a good man is, by communicating his goodness to do good with it: His mouth, the outlet of his mind, is a well of life, it is a constant spring, from whence issues good discourse for the edification of others, like streams that water the ground, and make it fruitful; and for their consolation, like streams that quench the thirst of the weary traveller: It is like a well of life that is pure and clean, not only not poisoned, but not muddled with any corrupt communication.

2. How industrious a bad man is, by concealing his badness, to do hurt with it. The mouth of the wicked covers violence; disguiseth the designed mischief with professions of friendship, that it may be carried on the more securely and effectually; as Joab kissed and killed, Judas kissed and betrayed; this is his sin to which the punishment answers, ver. 6. Violence covers the mouth of the wicked; what he got by violence, shall by violence be taken from him, Job v. 4, 5.

12. Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.

Here is, 1. The great mischief-maker, and that is malice; even where there is no manifest occasion of strife, yet hatred seeks occasion, and so stirs it up, and doth the devil's work. These are the most spiteful, ill-natured people that can be, who take a pleasure in setting their neighbours together by the ears, by tale-bearing, evil surmises, and misrepresentations; blowing up the sparks of contention which had lain buried into a flame, at which, with an unaccountable pleasure, they warm their hands.

2. The great peace-maker, and that is love, which covereth all sins, i. e. the offences among relations, which occasion discord: Love, instead of proclaiming and aggravating the offence, conceals and extenuates it as far as it is capable of being concealed and extenuated. Love will excuse the offence which we give through mistake, and unadvisedly, when we are able to say there was no ill intended, but it was an oversight, and we love our friend notwithstanding, this covers it. It will also overlook the offence that is given us, and so cover it, and make the best of it: by this means strife is prevented, or, if begun, peace is recovered and restored presently. The apostle quotes this, 1 Pet. iv. 8. Love will cover a multitude of sins.

13. In the lips of him that hath understanding, wisdom is found: but a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding.

Observe,

Observe, 1. Wisdom and grace are the honour of good men: He that hath understanding, that good understanding which they have that do the commandments, *wisdom is found in his lips*, i. e. it is discovered to be there, and consequently that he hath within a good treasure of it, and it is derived thence for the benefit of others: And it is a man's honour to have wisdom, but much more to be instrumental to make others wise.

2. Folly and sin are the shame of bad men: *A rod is for the back of him that wants a heart*; he exposeth himself to the lashes of his own conscience, to the scourges of the tongue, to the censures of the magistrate, and to the righteous judgments of God. They that foolishly, and wilfully go on in wicked ways, are preparing rods for themselves, the marks of which will be their perpetual disgrace.

14. Wife men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction.

Observe, 1. It is the wisdom of the wise that they treasure up a stock of useful knowledge, which will be their preservation. *Wisdom is therefore found in their lips*, (ver. 13.) because it is laid up in their hearts; out of which store, like the good householder, they bring things new and old. Whatever knowledge may be at any time useful to us, we must lay it up, because we know not but some time or other we may have occasion for it. We must continue laying up as long as we live; and be sure lay it up safe, that it may not be to seek when we want it.

2. It is the folly of fools that they lay up mischief in their hearts, which is ready to them in all they say, and works terror and destruction both to others and to themselves. They love devouring words, Psalm lii. 4. and these come uppermost; their mouth is near destruction, having the sharp arrows of bitter words, always at hand to throw about.

15. The rich man's wealth is his strong city: the destruction of the poor is their poverty.

This may be taken two ways:

1. As a reason why we should be diligent in our business, that we may avoid that sinking, dispiriting uneasiness which attends poverty, and may enjoy the benefit and comfort which they have that are beforehand in the world: Taking pains is really the way to make our selves and our families easy: Or, rather,

2. As a representation of the common mistakes both of rich and poor, concerning their outward condition.

(1.) Rich people think themselves happy because they are rich; but it is their mistake. *The rich man's wealth is*, in his own conceit, *his strong city*, whereas the worst of evils it is too weak and utterly insufficient to protect them from: It will prove, they are not so safe as they imagine; nay, their wealth may, perhaps, expose them.

(2.) Poor people think themselves undone because they are poor; but it is their mistake: *The destruction of the poor is their poverty*; it sinks their spirits, and ruins all their comforts; whereas a man may live very comfortably, though he has but a little to live on, if he be but content, and keep a good conscience, and live by faith.

16. The labour of the righteous tendeth to life; the fruit of the wicked to sin.

Solomon here confirms what his father had said, Psalm xxxvii. 16. *That a little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked.*

1. Perhaps, a righteous man has no more than what he works hard for; he eats only *the labour of his hands*, but that labour tendeth to life; he aims at nothing but to get an honest livelihood, covets not to be rich and great, but is willing to live, and maintain his family: Nor doth it tend only to his own life, but he would enable himself to do good to others; he therefore labours that he may have to give, Eph. iv. 28. all his business turns to some good account or other. Or, it may be meant of his labour in religion; he takes most pains in that which hath a tendency to eternal life; *seweth to the Spirit*, that he may reap life everlasting.

2. Perhaps, a wicked man's wealth is fruit which he did not labour for, but came easily by, but it tends to sin; he makes it the food and fuel of his lusts, his pride and luxury; he doth hurt with it, and not good; he gets hurt by it, and is hardened by it in his wicked ways. The things of this world are good or evil, life or death, as they are used, and as they are that have them.

17. He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof, erreth.

See here, 1. That those are in the right that do not only receive instruction, but retain it; that do not let it slip through carelessness, as the most do, nor let it go to those that would rob them of it; that keep instruction safe, keep it pure and entire, keep it for their own use, that they may govern themselves by it; keep it for the benefit of others, that they may instruct them; they that

do so are in the way of life; the way that has true comfort in it and eternal life at the end of it.

2. That those are in the wrong that do not only not receive instruction, but wilfully and obstinately refuse it when it is offered them; they will not be taught their duty, because it discovers their faults to them; that instruction which carries reproof in it, they have a particular aversion to, and certainly they err; it is a sign they err in judgment, and have false notions of good and evil; it is a cause of their erring in conversation. The traveller that has missed his way, and cannot bear to be told of it, and shewed the right way, must needs err still, err endlessly; he certainly misseth the way of life.

18. He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool.

Observe here, that malice is folly and wickedness.

1. It is so when it is concealed by flattery and dissimulation. He is a fool, though he may think himself a politician, that hides hatred with lying lips, lest if it break out he should be ashamed before men, and he should lose the opportunity of gratifying his malice. Lying lips are bad enough of themselves, but have a peculiar malignity in them, when they are made a cloke of maliciousness. But he is a fool who thinks to hide any thing from God.

2. It is no better when it is vented in spiteful and mischievous language. He that utters slander is a fool too; for God will sooner or later bring forth that righteousness as the light, which he endeavours to cloud, and will find an expedient to roll the reproach away.

19. In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin; but he that refraineth his lips is wise.

We are here admonished concerning the government of the tongue, that necessary duty of a christian.

1. It is good to say little, because in multitude of words there wanteth not sin, or sin doth not cease. It is seldom but they that speak much, speak much amiss; and among many words there cannot but be many idle words, which they must shortly give an account of. They that love to hear themselves talk, do not consider what work they are making for repentance; for that will be wanted, and first or last will be had, where there wanteth not sin.

2. It is therefore good to keep our mouth as with a bridle: He that refraineth his lips, that checks himself many a time, suppresseth what he has thought, and holds in that which would out, he is a wise man; it is an evidence of his wisdom, and he therein consults his own peace. Little said, soon amended, Amos v. 13. James i. 19.

20. The tongue of the just is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth. 21. The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom.

We are here taught how to value men; not by their wealth and preferment in the world, but by their virtue.

1. Good men are good for something; though they may be poor and low in the world, and may not have power and riches to do good with, yet as long as they have a mouth to speak, that will make them valuable and useful, and upon that account we must honour them that fear the Lord, because out of the good treasure of their heart they bring forth good things. 1. This makes them valuable: *The tongue of the just is as choice silver*, i. e. they are sincere, freed from the dross of guile and evil design: God's words are compared to silver purified, Psalm xii. 7. for they may be relied on; and such are the words of just men. They are of weight and worth, and will enrich those that hear them with wisdom that is better than choice silver. 2. It makes them useful: *The lips of the righteous feed many*; for they are full of the word of God, which is the bread of life; and that sound doctrine wherewith souls are nourished up. Pious discourse is spiritual food to the needy, to the hungry.

2. Bad men are good for nothing. 1. One can get no good by them; *The heart of the wicked is little worth*; and therefore that which comes out of the abundance of his heart cannot be worth much. His principles, his notions, his thoughts, his purposes, and all the things that fill him, and affect him, are worldly and carnal, and therefore of no value: *He that is of the earth, speaks of the earth*, and neither understands nor relisheth the things of God, John iii. 31. 1 Cor. ii. 14. The wicked man pretends, that though he doth not talk of religion as the just do, yet he has it within him, and thanks God his heart is good; but he that searcheth the heart here faith the contrary, it is nothing worth. 2. One can do no good upon them. While many are fed by the lips of the righteous, fools die for want of wisdom; and fools indeed they are to die for want of that which they might so easily come by. Fools die for want of a heart, so the word is; they perish for want of consideration and resolution; they have no heart to do any thing

thing for their own good : While the righteous feed others, fools starve themselves.

22. The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.

Wordly wealth is that which most men have their hearts very much upon, but they generally mistake both in the nature of the thing they desire, and in the way by which they hope to compass it : We are therefore told here,

1. What that wealth is which is indeed desirable ; not having abundance only, but having it, and *no sorrow with it* : no disquieting care to get and keep it ; no vexation of spirit in the enjoyment of it ; no tormenting grief for the loss of it ; no guilt contracted by the abuse of it : To have it, and to have a heart to take the comfort of it ; to do good with it, and to serve God with joyfulness and gladness of heart in the use of it.

2. Whence this desirable wealth is to be expected ; not by making our selves drudges to the world, *Psalms cxxvii. 2.* but by *the blessing of God*, that is it that *makes rich, and adds no sorrow* ; what comes from the love of God, the grace of God comes along with it, to preserve the soul from those turbulent lusts and passions, which otherwise the increase of riches is commonly the incentive of. He had said, *ver. 4. The hand of the diligent makes rich*, as a means ; but here he ascribes it to *the blessing of the Lord* ; but that blessing is upon *the hand of the diligent*. It is thus in spiritual riches : Diligence in getting them is our duty, but God's blessing and grace must have all the glory of that which is acquired, *Deut. viii. 17, 18.*

23. *It is a sport to a fool to do mischief : but a man of understanding hath wisdom.*

Here is, 1. Sin exceeding sinful. *It is as a laughter to a fool to do mischief* ; it is as natural to him, and as pleasant, as it is to a man to laugh : *Wickedness is his Isaac*, that is the word here ; it is his delight, his darling, and that in which he pleaseth himself. He makes a laughing matter of sin : When he is warned not to sin, from the consideration of the law of God, and the revelation of his wrath against sin, he makes a jest of the admonition, and laughs at the shaking of the spear ; when he has sinned, instead of sorrowing for it, he boasts of it, ridicules reproofs, and laughs away the convictions of his own conscience, *Prov. xiv. 9.*

2. Wisdom exceeding wise ; for it carries along with it the evidence of its own excellency ; it may be predicated of itself, and it is encomium enough ; you need say no more in praise of *a man of understanding*, but that he is an *understanding man*, he *hath wisdom* ; he is so wise as not to do mischief, or if he has through oversight offended, he is so wise as not to make a jest of it. Or, to speak wisdom wise indeed, read it thus : *As it is a sport to a fool to do mischief, so it is to a man of understanding to have wisdom, and to shew it.* Besides the future recompence, a good man hath as much present pleasure in the restraints and exercises of religion, as sinners can pretend to in the liberties and enjoyments of sin ; and much more, and much better.

24. The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him : but the desire of the righteous shall be granted. 25. As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more : but the righteous is an everlasting foundation.

It is here said, and said again to the righteous, that *it shall be well with them* ; and to the wicked, *wo to them* ; and these are set the one over against the other, for their mutual illustration.

1. It shall be as ill with the wicked as they can fear, and as well with the righteous as they can desire. (1.) The wicked, it is true, buoy themselves up sometimes in their wickedness with vain hopes which will deceive them, but at other times they cannot but be haunted with just fears, and those *fears shall come upon them* ; the God they provoke will be every whit as terrible, as they, when they are under their greatest damps, apprehend him to be : *As is thy fear, so is thy wrath*, *Psalms xc. 11.* Wicked men fear the punishment of sin, but they have not wisdom to improve their fears, by making their escape, and so the thing they feared comes upon them, and their present terrors are earnest of their future torments. (2.) The righteous, it is true, sometimes have their fears, but their desire is towards the favour of God, and a happiness in him, and that *desire shall be granted* : According to their faith, not according to their fear, it shall be *unto them*. *Psalms xxxvii. 4.*

2. The prosperity of the wicked shall quickly end, but the happiness of the righteous shall never end, *ver. 25.* The wicked make a great noise, hurry themselves and others, like a *whirlwind*, which threatens to bear down all before it, but, like a *whirlwind*, they are presently gone, and irrecoverably they pass, they are *no more* ; all about them are quiet and glad when the storm is over, *Psalms xxxvii. 10, 36.* *Job xx. 5.* The righteous, on the contrary, make no shew ; they lie hid, like a *foundation* which is low, and out of sight, but they are fixed in their resolution to cleave to God,

established in virtue, and they shall be an *everlasting foundation*, immoveably good, he that is holy shall be holy still, and immoveably happy, his hope is built on a rock, and therefore not shocked by the storm, *Matth. vii. 24.* *The righteous is the pillar of the world*, so some read it, the world stands for their sakes ; the holy seed is the substance thereof.

26. As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him.

Observe 1. Those that are of a slothful, lazy disposition, that love their ease, and cannot apply their minds to any business, are not fit to be employed, no not so much as to be sent on an errand, for they will neither deliver a message with any care, nor make any haste back. Such therefore are very unmeet to be ministers, Christ's messengers ; he will not own the sending forth sluggards into his harvest. 2. They that are guilty of so great an oversight as to intrust such with any affair, and put confidence in them, will certainly have vexation with them. A slothful servant is to his master as uneasy and troublesome as *vinegar to the teeth*, and *smoke to the eyes* ; he provokes his passion, as vinegar sets the teeth an edge, and occasions him grief to see his business neglected and undone, as smoke sets the eyes a weeping.

27. The fear of the LORD prolongeth days : but the years of the wicked shall be shortened. 28. The hope of the righteous shall be gladness : but the expectation of the wicked shall perish.

Observe 1. Religion lengthens mens lives and crowns their hopes : *What man is he that loves life ?* let him *fear God*, and that will secure him from many things that would prejudice his life, and secure to him life enough in this world, and eternal life in the other, *the fear of the Lord* will add days more than was expected, will add them endlessly, will prolong them to the days of eternity ; *What man is he that would see good days ?* let him be religious, and then his days shall not only be many, but happy, very happy as well as very many, for *the hope of the righteous shall be gladness*, they shall have what they hope for, to their unspeakable satisfaction. It is something future and unseen that they place their happiness in, *Rom. viii. 24, 25.* not what they have in hand, but what they have in hope, and their hope will shortly be swallowed up in fruition, and it will be their everlasting gladness : *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

2. Wickedness shortens mens lives and frustrates their hopes ; the years of the wicked that are spent in the pleasures of sin and the drudgery of the world, *shall be shortened* ; cut down the trees that cumber the ground. (And whatever comfort or happiness a wicked man promiseth himself in this world or the other, he will be frustrated ; for *the expectation of the wicked shall perish* : his hope shall be turned into endless despair.

29. The way of the LORD is strength to the upright : but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity. 30. The righteous shall never be removed : but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth.

These two verses are to the same purpose with those next before, speaking the happiness of the godly and the misery of the wicked ; it is necessary that this be inculcated upon us, so loth are we to believe and consider it.

1. Strength and stability are entailed upon integrity : *The way of the Lord*, i. e. the providence of God, the way in which he walks towards us, *is strength to the upright*, i. e. confirms him in his uprightness : all God's dealings with him, merciful and afflictive, serve to quicken him to his duty, and animate him against his discouragements. Or, *The way of the Lord*, i. e. the way of godliness, in which he appoints us to walk, *is strength to the upright*, i. e. the closer we keep to that way, and the more our hearts are enlarged to proceed in it, the better fitted we are both for services and sufferings : a good conscience kept pure from sin, gives a man boldness in a dangerous time ; and constant diligence in duty makes a man's work easy in a busy time ; the more we do for God, the more we may do, *Job xvii. 9.* That *joy of the Lord* which is to be found only in the *way of the Lord*, will be our strength, *Neh. viii. 10.* and therefore *the righteous shall never be removed*. They that have an established virtue, have an established peace and happiness which nothing can rob them of, they *have an everlasting foundation*, *ver. 25.*

2. Ruin and destruction are the certain consequence of wickedness. The wicked shall not only not inherit the earth, though they lay up their treasure in it, but they shall not so much as inhabit the earth ; God's judgments will root them out. Destruction, swift and sure destruction, *shall be to the workers of iniquity* ; destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. Nay, that way of the Lord which is the strength of the upright, is contrition, consumption and terror *to the workers of iniquity* : the same gospel which to the one is a *savour of life unto life*, to the other is a *savour of death unto death* ; the same providence, like the same sun, softens the one and hardens the other. *Hos. xiv. 9.*

31. The

31. The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom : but the froward tongue shall be cut out. 32. The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable ; but the mouth of the wicked *speaketh* frowardness.

Here, as before, men are judged of, and accordingly are justified or condemned by their words, *Matth. xii. 37.*

1. It is both the proof and the praise of a man's wisdom and goodness, that he speaks wisely and well. A good man in his discourse *brings forth wisdom*, for the benefit of others ; God gives him wisdom as a reward of his righteousness, *Ecc. ii. 26.* and he in gratitude for that gift, and justice to the giver doth good with it, and with his wife and pious discourses edifies many. He *knows what is acceptable*, what discourse will be pleasing to God, for that is it that he studies more than to oblige the company, and what will be agreeable both to the speaker and to the hearers, what will become him, and benefit them, and that he will speak.

2. It is the sin, and will be the ruin of a wicked man, that he speaks wickedly like himself. *The mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness*, that which is displeasing to God, and provoking to those he converseth with ; and what comes of it ? why, *the froward tongue shall be cut out*, as sure as the *flattering one*, *Psal. xii. 3.*

C H A P. XI.

1. **A** False balance is abomination to the LORD : but a just weight is his delight.

As religion towards God is a branch of universal righteousness ; he is not an honest man that is not devout ; so righteousness towards men is a branch of true religion, he is not a godly man that is not honest, nor can he expect that his devotions should be accepted ; for

1. Nothing is more offensive to God than deceit in commerce ; *A false balance* is here put for all manner of unjust and fraudulent practices in dealing with any person, which were all an *abomination to the Lord*, and render those abominable to him that allow themselves in the use of such cursed arts of thriving. It is an affront to justice which God is the patron of, as well as a wrong to our neighbour, whom God is the protector of. Men make light of such frauds, and think there is no sin in that which there is money to be got by, and while it passeth undiscovered they cannot blame themselves for it ; a blot is no blot, till it is hit, *Hos. xii. 7, 8.* But they are not the less an abomination to God, who will be the avenger of those that defraud their brethren.

2. Nothing more pleasing to God than fair and honest dealing, nor more necessary to make us and our devotions acceptable to him ; *a just weight is his delight.* He himself goes by a *just weight*, and holds the scale of judgment with an even hand, and therefore is pleased with those that are herein followers of him. A balance cheats under pretence of doing right most exactly, and therefore is the greater abomination to God.

2. *When pride cometh, then cometh shame :* but with the lowly is wisdom.

Observe, (1.) How he that exalteth himself is here abased, and contempt put upon him. *When pride cometh, then cometh shame*, i. e. Pride is a sin which men have reason to be themselves ashamed of ; it is a shame to a man who springs out of the earth, who lives upon alms, depends upon God, and has forfeited all he has to be proud. It is a sin which others cry out shame on, and look upon with disdain ; he that is haughty makes himself contemptible ; it is a sin for which God often brings men down, as he did Nebuchadnezzar and Herod, whose ignominy immediately attended their vain glory ; for God *resists the proud*, contradicts them and counterworks them in that thing they are proud of, *Isa. ii. 11, &c.*

(2.) How he that humbleth himself is here exalted, and a high character given him ; as with the proud there is folly, and will be shame, so *with the lowly there is wisdom*, and will be honour, for a man's wisdom gains him respect, and makes his face to shine before men, or if any be so base as to trample upon the humble, God will give them grace, which will be their glory. Considering how safe, and quiet, and easy, they are that are of a humble spirit, what communion they have with God, and comfort in themselves ; we will say, that *with the lowly is wisdom.*

3. The integrity of the upright shall guide them : but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.

It is not only promised that God will guide the upright, and threaten that he will destroy the transgressors, but that we may be the more fully assured of both, it is here represented, as if the nature of the thing were such on both sides, that it would do it self.

1. The integrity of an honest man will it self be his guide, in the way of duty, and the way of safety. His principles are fixed,

his rule is certain, and therefore his way is plain, his sincerity keeps him steady, and he needs not tack about, every time the wind turns, having no other end to drive at, but to keep a good conscience. *Integrity and uprightness will preserve men*, *Psal. xxv. 21.*

2. The iniquity of an ill man will it self be his ruin. As the plainness of a good man will be his protection, though he is never so much exposed, so the perverseness of sinners will be their destruction, though they think themselves never so well fortified. They shall fall into pits of their own digging, *Prov. v. 22.*

4. Riches profit not in the day of wrath : but righteousness delivereth from death.

Note, 1. *The day of death* will be a *day of wrath* ; it is a messenger of God's wrath, therefore when Moses had meditated on man's mortality, he takes occasion from thence to admire *the power of God's anger*, *Psal. xc. 11.* It is not a debt owing to nature, but to God's justice. After death *the judgment*, and that is a *day of wrath*, *Rev. vi. 17.*

2. Riches will stand men in no stead in that day ; they will neither put by the stroke, nor ease the pain, much less take out the sting ; what profit will this world's birth-rights be of then ? In the day of publick judgments, riches expose men many times rather than protect them, *Ezek. vii. 19.*

3. It is righteousness only that will *deliver from the evil of death* ; a good conscience will make death easy, and take off the terror of it ; it is the privilege of the righteous only, not to be hurt of the second death, and so not much hurt by the first.

5. The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way : but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.

6. The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them : but transgressors shall be taken in *their own* naughtiness.

These two verses are in effect the same, and both to the same purpose with, *ver. 3.* For the truths are here of such certainty and weight, that they cannot be too oft inculcated. Let us govern our selves by these principles,

1. That the ways of religion are plain and safe, and in them we may enjoy a holy security. A living principle of honesty and grace will be, (1.) Our best direction in the right way, in every doubtful case, to say to us, *this is the way, walk in it.* He that acts without guile looks right on, and sees his way before him. (2.) Our best deliverance from every false way : *The righteousness of the upright* shall be armour of proof to them, to deliver them from the allurements of the devil and the world, and from their menaces.

2. The ways of wickedness are dangerous and destructive. *The wicked shall fall* into misery and ruin *by their own wickedness*, and be *taken in their own naughtiness* as in a snare ; O Israel, thou hast destroyed thy self. Their sin will be their punishment ; that very thing by which they contrived to shelter themselves, will make against them.

7. When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish : and the hope of unjust men perisheth.

Note, 1. Even wicked men, while they live may keep up a confident expectation of a happiness when they die, or at least a happiness in this world. The hypocrite has his hope, in which he wraps himself as the spider in her web ; the worldling expects great matters from his wealth, he calls it goods laid up for many years, and hopes to take his ease in it, and to be merry ; but in death their expectation will be frustrated, the worldling must leave this world which he expected to continue in, and the hypocrite will come short of that world which he expected to remove to, *Job xxvii. 8.*

2. It will be the great aggravation of the misery of wicked people, that their hopes will sink into despair then when they expected them to be crowned with fruition. When a godly man dies his expectations are out-done, and all his fears vanish, but when a wicked man dies, his expectations are dashed, dashed to pieces, in that very day his thoughts perish, with which he had pleased himself, his hopes vanish.

8. The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead.

As always in death, so sometimes in life the righteous are remarkably favoured, and the wicked crossed.

1. Good people are helped out of the distresses, which they thought themselves lost in, and their feet set in a large room, *Psal. lxvi. 12,—34. 19.* God has found out a way to deliver his people then when they have despaired, and their enemies have triumphed as if the wilderness had shut them in.

2. The wicked have fallen into the same distresses, which they thought themselves far from, nay, which they had been instrumental to bring the righteous into, so that they seem to come in their stead, as a ransom for the just. Mordecai is saved from the gallows, Daniel from the lyon's den, and Peter from the prison, and their

their persecutors *come in their stead*. Israel is delivered out of the Red sea, and the Egyptians drowned in it. So precious are the faints in God's eye, that he *gives men for them*, Isa. xliii. 3, 4.

9. An hypocrite with *his* mouth destroyeth his neighbour : but through knowledge shall the just be delivered.

Here is, 1. Hypocrisy designing ill. It is not only the murderer with his sword, but the *Hypocrite with his mouth* that destroys his neighbour, decoying him into sin, or into mischief, by the specious pretences of kindness and good-will. *Death and life are in the power of the tongue*, but no tongue more fatal than the flattering tongue.

2. Honesty defeating the design, and escaping the snare ; *through knowledge* of the devices of Satan *shall the just be delivered* from the snares which the hypocrite hath laid for him ; seducers shall not deceive the elect. By the knowledge of God, and the scriptures, and their own hearts, shall the just be delivered from those that lie in wait to deceive, and so to destroy, Rom. xvi. 18, 19.

10. When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth : and when the wicked perish, *there is* shouting. 11. By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted : but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.

It is here observed,

1. That good men are generally well beloved by their neighbours, but no body cares for wicked people. (1.) It is true there are some few that are enemies to the righteous, that are prejudiced against God and godliness, and are therefore vexed to see good men in power and prosperity ; but all indifferent persons, even those that have no great stock of religion themselves have a good word for a good man ; and therefore *when it goes well with the righteous*, when they are advanced, and put into a capacity of doing good according to their desire, it is so much the better for all about them, and *the city rejoiceth*. For the honour and encouragement of virtue, and it is the accomplishment of the promise of God, we should be glad to see virtuous men prosper in the world, and brought into reputation. (2.) Wicked people may, perhaps, have here and there a well-wisher among those who are altogether such as themselves, but among the generality of their neighbours they get ill will, they may be feared, but they are not loved, and therefore *when they perish there is shouting*, every body takes a pleasure in seeing them disgraced, and disarmed, removed out of places of trust and power, chafed out of the world, and wisheth never greater loss come to the town, the rather because they hope *the righteous may come in their stead*, as they into trouble, instead of the righteous, ver. 8. Let a sense of honour therefore keep us in the paths of virtue, that we may live desired, and die lamented, and not be hissed off the stage, Job xxvii. 23. Psal. lii. 6.

2. That there is good reason for this, because those that are good do good, but (as saith the proverb of the ancients) *wickedness proceedeth from the wicked*. (1.) Good men are publick blessings. *Vir bonus est commune bonum*. By the blessing of the upright, the blessings with which they are blessed, which enlarge their sphere of usefulness, by the blessings with which they bless their neighbours, their advice, their example, their prayers, and all the instances of their serviceableness to the publick interests, by the blessings with which God blesteth others for their sake, by these *the city is exalted*, and made more comfortable to the inhabitants, and more considerable among its neighbours. (2.) Wicked men are publick nuisances ; not only the burthens, but plagues of their generation ; the city is *overthrown by the mouth of the wicked*, whose evil communications corrupt good manners, are enough to debauch a town, to ruin virtue in it, and bring down the judgments of God upon it.

12. He that is void of wisdom, despiseth his neighbour : but a man of understanding holdeth his peace.

13. A tale-bearer revealeth secrets : but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.

Silence is here recommended as an instance of true friendship, and a preservative of it, and therefore an evidence, 1. Of wisdom ; *a man of understanding* that has rule over his own spirit, if he be provoked, *holdeth his peace*, that he neither give vent to his passion, nor kindle the passion of others, by any opprobrious language, or peevish reflections. 2. Of sincerity. *He that is of a faithful spirit*, that is true, not only to his own promise, but to the interest of his friend, he *concealeth every matter*, which if divulged may turn to the prejudice of his neighbour.

This prudent friendly concealment is here opposed to two very ill vices of the tongue ; 1. Speaking scornfully of a man to his face. *He that is void of wisdom* discovers his folly by this, he *despiseth his neighbour*, calls him *raca*, and thou fool upon the least provocation, and tramples upon him as not worthy to be set with the dogs of his flock. He undervalues himself, who thus undervalues one that is made of the same mold. 2. Speaking spitefully

of a man behind his back. A *tale-bearer* that carries all the stories he can pick up, true or false, from house to house, to make mischief, and sow discord, he *revealeth secrets* which he has been entrusted with, and so breaks the laws, and forfeits all the privileges of friendship and conversation.

14. Where no counsel is, the people fall : but in the multitude of counsellors *there is* safety.

Here is, 1. The bad omen of a kingdom's ruin : *Where no counsel is*, no consultation at all, but every thing done rashly, or no prudent consultation for the common good, but only caballing for parties and divided interests, *the people fall*, crumble into factions, fall to pieces, fall together by the ears, and fall an easy prey to their common enemies. Councils of war are necessary to the operations of war ; two eyes see more than one ; and mutual advice is in order to mutual assistance.

2. The good presage of a kingdom's prosperity : *In multitude of counsellors*, that see their need one of another, and act in concert, and with concern for the publick welfare, *there is safety* ; for what prudent methods one discerns not another may. In our private affairs, we shall often find it to our advantage to advise with many ; if they agree in their advice, our way will be the more clear ; if they differ, we shall hear what is to be said on all sides, and be the better able to determine.

15. He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it : and he that hateth suretiship, is sure.

Here we are taught,

1. In general, that we may not use our estates as we will ; he that gave them to us has reserved himself a power to direct us how we shall use them ; for they are not our own, we are but stewards ; and further, that God in his law consults our interest, and teaches us that charity which begins at home, as well as that which must not end there. There is a good husbandry, that is, good divinity, and a discretion in ordering our affairs, which is part of the character of a good man, Psalm cxii. 5. Every man must be just to his family, else he is not true to his stewardship.

2. In particular, that we must not enter rashly into suretiship ; (1.) Because there is danger of bringing our selves into trouble by it, and our families too when we are gone. *He that is surety for a stranger*, for any one that asks him, and promiseth him to be bound for him another time, for one whose person, perhaps, he knows, and thinks he knows his circumstances, but is mistaken, he *shall smart for it*, *contritione conteretur*, he shall be certainly and sadly crushed and broken by it, and, perhaps, become a bankrupt. Our Lord Jesus was surety for us when we were strangers, nay, enemies, and he smarted for it ; it pleased the Lord to bruise him. (2.) Because he that resolves against all such suretiship keeps upon sure grounds, which a man may do if he take care not to launch out any further into business than his own credit will carry him, so that he needs not ask others to be bound for him.

16. A gracious woman retaineth honour : and strong men retain riches.

Here, 1. It is allowed that *strong men retain riches* ; that those who baffle in the world, that are men of spirit and interest, and are able to make their part good against all that stand in their way, are likely to keep what they have, and to get more ; while those that are weak are preyed upon by all about them.

2. It is taken for granted, that *a gracious woman* is as solicitous to preserve her reputation for wisdom and modesty, humility and courtesy, and all those other graces that are the true ornaments of her sex, as strong men are to secure their estates ; and those women that are truly gracious, will, in like manner, effectually secure their honour by their prudence and good conduct. *A gracious woman* is as honourable as a valiant man, and her honour is as sure.

17. The merciful man doeth good to his own soul : but *he that is* cruel, troubleth his own flesh.

It is a common principle, Every one for himself ; *Proximus egomet mihi* : Now if this be rightly understood, it will be a reason for the cherishing of gracious dispositions in our selves, and the crucifying of corrupt ones. We are friends or enemies to our selves, even in respect of present comfort, according as we are, or are not governed by religious principles.

1. A *merciful*, tender, good-humoured man, *doeth good to his own soul*, makes and keeps himself easy ; he hath the pleasure of doing his duty, and contributing to the comfort of those that are to him as *his own soul* ; for *we are members one of another*. He that waters others with his temporal good things, God will water him with his spiritual blessings, which he will find to do the best good to his own soul. See Isa. lviii. 7, &c. *If thou hide not thine eyes from thine own flesh*, but doest good to others, as to thy self ; if thou doest good with thy own soul, and *draw that out to the hungry*, thou doest good to thy own soul ; for the Lord shall *satisfy thy soul*, and *make fat thy bones*. Some make it part of the character of a *merciful*

deceitful man, that he will make much of himself; that disposition which inclines him to be charitable to others, will oblige him to allow himself also that which is convenient, and to *enjoy the good of all his labour*. We may by the soul understand the inward man, as the apostle calls it, and then it teaches us, that the first, and great act of mercy, is to provide well for our own souls, the necessary supports of the spiritual life.

2. A *cruel, froward, ill-natured man, troubleth his own flesh*, and so his sin becomes his punishment; he starves and dies for want of what he hath, because he has not a heart to use it, either for others good, or for his own. He is vexatious to his nearest relations, that are, and should be to him as his own flesh, *Eph. v.*

29. Envy, and malice, and greediness of the world, are the rottenness of the bones, and the consumption of the flesh.

18. The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness, *shall be a sure reward*.

Note, 1. Sinners put a most fatal cheat upon themselves. *The wicked worketh a deceitful work*, builds himself a house upon the sand, which will deceive him when the storm comes; promiseth himself that by his sin, which he will never gain; nay, it is cutting his throat when it smiles upon him. *Sin deceived me, and by it slew me*.

2. Saints lay up the best securities for themselves; he that *soweth righteousness*, that is good, and makes it his business to do good, with an eye to a future recompence, he shall have a *sure reward*; it is made as sure to him as eternal truth can make it. If the seedness fail not, the harvest shall not, *Gal. vi. 8*.

19. As righteousness *tendeth to life*: so he that pursueth evil, *pursueth it to his own death*.

It is here shewed that righteousness, not only by the divine judgment will end in life, and wickedness in death, but that righteousness in its own nature has a direct tendency to life, and wickedness to death.

1. True holiness is true happiness, it is a preparative for it, a pledge and earnest of it. *Righteousness* inclines, disposeth, and leads the soul to life.

2. In like manner, they that indulge themselves in sin, are fitting themselves for destruction. The more violent a man is in sinful pursuits, the more eagerly bent he is upon his own destruction; he awakens it when it seemed to slumber, and hastens it when it seemed to linger.

20. They that are of a froward heart *are abomination to the LORD*: but *such as are upright in their way, are his delight*.

It concerns us to know what God hates, and what he loves, that we may govern ourselves accordingly; may avoid his displeasure, and recommend our selves to his favour. Now here we are told,

1. That nothing is more offensive to God than hypocrisy and double-dealing, for that is signified by the word which we translate frowardness; pretending justice, but intending wrong; walking in crooked ways to avoid discovery. *These are of a froward heart*, who act in contradiction to that which is good, under a profession of that which is good, and such are, more than any sinners, an *abomination to the Lord*, *Isa. lxxv. 5*.

2. That nothing is more pleasing to God than sincerity and plain dealing: *Such as are upright in their way*, that aim and act with integrity; that have their conversation in the world, in *simplicity and godly sincerity*, not with *fleshy wisdom*, these God delights in, these he even boasts of; *Hast thou considered my servant Job?* and will have us to admire; *Behold, an Israelite indeed!*

21. *Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished*: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered.

1. That confederacies in sin shall certainly be broken, and shall not avail to protect the sinners. *Though hand join in hand*, though they be many that concur by their practice to keep wickedness in countenance, and engage to stand by one another in defending it against all the attacks of virtue and justice; though they are in league for the support and propagation of it; though wicked children tread in the steps of their wicked parents, and resolve to keep up the trade in defiance of religion, yet all this will not protect them from the justice of God, they shall not be held guiltless; it will not excuse them to say, they did as the most did, and as their company did; they *shall not be unpunished*, witness the flood that was brought upon a whole world of ungodly men. Their number, and strength, and unanimity in sin, will stand them in no stead when the day of vengeance comes.

2. That entails of religion shall certainly be blessed: *The seed of the righteous* that follow the steps of their righteousness, though they may fall into trouble, yet in due time *shall be delivered*. Though justice may come slowly to punish the wicked, and mercy

may come slowly to save the righteous, yet both will come surely. Sometimes *the seed of the righteous*, though they are not themselves righteous, are delivered for the sake of their godly ancestors, as *Israel* often, and the seed of *David*.

22. As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion.

By discretion here we must understand religion and grace, a true taste and relish (so the word signifies) of the honours and pleasures that attend an unspotted virtue; so that a *woman without discretion*, is a woman of a loose and dissolute conversation; and then observe,

1. It is taken for granted here, that beauty and comeliness of body is *as a jewel of gold*, a thing very valuable, and, where there is wisdom and grace to guard against the temptations of it, it is a great ornament: *Gratior est pulchro veniens de corpore virtus*. But that a foolish wanton woman, of a light carriage, is fitly compared to a swine, though she be never so handsome, wallowing in the mire of filthy lusts, with which the mind and conscience is defiled, and, though washed, returning to them.

2. It is lamented that beauty should be so abused as it is by those that have not modesty with it, and ill bestowed upon them: It is quite misplaced, *as a jewel in a swine's snout*, with which he routs in the dunghill; if beauty be not guarded by virtue, the virtue is exposed by the beauty. It may be applied to all other bodily endowments and accomplishments; it is pity those should have them, that have not discretion to use them well.

23. The desire of the righteous is only good: but the expectation of the wicked is wrath.

This tells us what *the desire and expectation of the righteous*, and of *the wicked* is, and how it will prove; what they would have, and what they shall have.

1. *The righteous* would have good, only good; all they desire is, that it may go well with all about them; they wish no hurt to any, but happiness to all; as to themselves, their desire is not to gratify any evil lust, but to obtain the favour of a good God, and to preserve the peace of a good conscience; and good they shall have; that good which they desire, *Psal. xxxvii. 4*.

2. *The wicked* would have wrath, they desire the woful day, that God's judgments may gratify their passion and revenge, may remove those that stand in their way, and that they may make an advantage to themselves by fishing in troubled waters; and wrath they shall have, so shall their doom be; they expect and desire mischief to others, but it shall return upon themselves; as they loved cursing, they shall have enough of it.

24. There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it *tendeth to poverty*.

Note, 1. It is possible a man may grow rich, by a prudent spending of what he has; may scatter in works of piety, charity, and generosity, and yet may increase; nay, by that means may increase, as the corn is increased by being sown. By cheerful using what we have, our spirits are exhilarated, and so fitted for the business we have to do; by minding which closely, what we have is increased; it gains a reputation which contributes to the increase. But it is especially to be ascribed to God; he blesteth the giving hand, and so makes it a getting hand, *2 Cor. ix. 10*. *Give, and it shall be given you*.

2. It is possible a man may grow poor, by a paltry sparing of what he has, *withholding more than is meet*, not paying just debts, not relieving the poor, not providing what is convenient for the family, not allowing necessary expences for the preservation of the goods; this *tends to poverty*; it cramps mens ingenuity and industry, weakens their interest, loses their credit, and forfeits the blessing of God: and let men be never so saving of what they have, if God blast it, and blow upon it, it comes to nothing; *a fire not blown shall consume it*, *Hag. i. 6, 9*.

25. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth, shall be watered also himself.

So backward we are to works of charity, and so ready to think that giving undoes us, that we need to have it very much pressed upon us, how much it is for our own advantage to do good to others, as before, *ver. 17*.

1. We shall have the comfort of it in our own bosoms; *the liberal soul*, the soul of blessing, that prays for the afflicted, and provides for them; that scatters blessings with gracious lips, and generous hands; that soul *shall be made fat* with true pleasure, and enriched with more grace.

2. We shall have the recompence of it both from God and man: *He that watereth others with the streams of his bounty, shall be watered also himself*; God will certainly return it in the dews, in the plentiful showers of his blessing, which he will pour

out, till there be not room enough to receive it, Mal. iii. 10. Men that have any sense of gratitude will return it if there be occasion; the merciful shall find mercy, and the kind be kindly dealt with.

3. We shall be enabled still to do yet more good: *He that watereth, even he shall be as rain*, so some read it; he shall be recruited as the clouds are which return after the rain, and shall be further useful, and acceptable, as the rain to the new mown grass. *He that teacheth shall learn*, so the Chaldee reads it; he that useth his knowledge in teaching others, shall himself be taught of God; to him that hath, and useth what he hath, more shall be given.

26. He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it.

See here, 1. What use we are to make of the gifts of God's bounty; we must not hoard them up merely for our own advantage, that we may be enriched by them, but we must bring them forth for the benefit of others, that they may be supported and maintained by them: It is a sin, when corn is dear and scarce, to withhold it, in hopes it will still grow dearer, so to keep up and advance the market, when it is already so high that the poor suffer by it; and at such a time it is the duty of those that have stocks of corn by them, to consider the poor, and to be willing to sell at the market price, and content with moderate profit, and not aim to make a gain of God's judgments: It is a noble and extensive piece of charity, for those that have stores wherewithal to do it, to help to keep the markets low then, when the price of our commodities grows excessive.

2. What regard we are to have to the voice of the people; we are not to think it an indifferent thing, and not worth heeding, whether we have the ill will and word, or the good will and word of our neighbours; their prayers or their curses; for here we are taught to dread their curses, and forego our own profit rather than incur them; and to court their blessings, and be at some expence to purchase them. Sometimes *vox populi is vox Dei*.

27. He that diligently seeketh good, procureth favour: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him.

Observe, 1. Those that are industrious to do good in the world, get themselves beloved, both with God and man. *He that riseth early to that which is good*, so the word is; that seeks opportunities of serving his friends, and relieving the poor, and lays out himself therein, *he procureth favour*; all about him love him, and speak well of him, and will be ready to do him a kindness; and which is better than that, better than life, he hath God's loving kindness.

2. Those that are industrious to do mischief, are preparing ruin for themselves; *it shall come unto them*; some time or other they will be paid in their own coin. And, observe, *seeking mischief* is here set in opposition to *seeking good*; for those that are not doing good, are doing hurt.

28. He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.

Observe, 1. Our riches will fail us when we are in the greatest need; *he that trusteth in them*, as if they would secure him the favour of God, and be his protection and portion, *he shall fall*, as a man that lays his weight on a broken reed, which will not only disappoint him, but run into his hand and pierce him.

2. Our righteousness will stand us in stead when our riches fail us: *The righteous shall then flourish as a branch*, the branch of righteousness; like a tree, whose leaf shall not wither, *Psalms i. 3.* Even in death, when riches fail men, the bones of the righteous shall flourish as an herb, *Isa. lxvi. 14.* When those that take root in the world wither, those that are grafted into Christ, and partake of his root and fatness, shall be fruitful and flourishing.

29. He that troubleth his own house, shall inherit the wind: and the fool shall be servant to the wife of heart.

Two extreams in the management of family affairs are here condemned, and the ill consequences of them foretold.

1. Carefulness and carnal policy on the one hand. There are those that by their extream earnestness in pursuit of the world, their carking about their business, and fretting about their losses; their strictness with their servants, and their niggardliness towards their families, *trouble their own houses*, and give continual vexation to all about them; while others think, by supporting factions and feuds in their families, which are really a trouble to their houses, to serve some turn for themselves, and either get, or save by it: but they will both be disappointed; they will *inherit the wind*: All they will get by these arts, will not only be empty and worthless as the wind, but noisy and troublesome, vanity and vexation.

2. Carelessness and want of common prudence on the other hand. He that is a fool in his business, that either minds it not, or goes awkwardly about it, that has no contrivance and consideration, he

not only loseth his reputation and interest, but becomes a servant to the wife in heart; he is impoverished, and forced to work for his living; while those that manage wisely raise themselves, and come to have dominion over him, and others like him. It is rational, and very fit, that *the fool should be servant to the wife in heart*, and, upon that account, among others, we are bound to submit our wills to the will of God, and to be subject to him, because we are fools, and he is infinitely wise.

30. The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.

This shews what great blessings good men are, especially those that are eminently wise, to the places where they live, and therefore how much to be valued.

1. The righteous are as *trees of life*; the fruits of their piety and charity, their instructions, reproofs, examples and prayers, their interest in heaven, and their influence upon earth, are like the fruits of that tree, precious and useful, contributing to the support and nourishment of the spiritual life in many; they are the ornaments of paradise, God's church on earth, for whose sake it stands.

2. The wise are something more, they are as trees of knowledge, not forbidden, but commanded knowledge. *He that is wise*, by communicating his wisdom, *wins souls*, wins upon them to bring them in love with God and holiness, and so wins them over into the interests of God's kingdom among men. The wise are said to *turn many to righteousness*, and that is the same with winning souls here, *Dan. xii. 3.* Abraham's proselytes are called *the souls that he had gotten*, *Gen. xii. 5.* They that would win souls have need of wisdom to know how to deal with them; and they that do win souls, shew that they are wise.

31. Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner.

This, I think, is the only one of Solomon's proverbs that has that note of attention prefixed to it, *Behold!* which intimates, that it contains not only an evident truth, which may be beheld, but an eminent truth, which must be considered.

1. Some understand both parts of a recompence in displeasure; *the righteous*, if they do amiss, shall be punished for their offences in this world; much more shall wicked people be punished for theirs, which are committed, not through infirmity, but with a high hand. If judgment begin at the house of God, what will become of the ungodly, *1 Pet. iv. 17, 18.* *Luke xxiii. 31.*

2. I rather understand it of a recompence of reward to the righteous, and punishment to sinners. Let us behold providential retributions. There are some recompences in the earth, in this world, and in the things of this world, which prove that, *Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth*, *Psalms lviii. 11.* but they are not universal; many sins go unpunished in the earth, and services unrewarded, which proves that there is a judgment to come, and there will be more exact and full retributions in the future state. Many times *the righteous are recompensed* for their righteousness here in the earth, though that is not the principal, much less the only reward, either intended for them, or intended by them; but whatever the word of God hath promised them, or the wisdom of God sees good for them, they shall have in the earth. *The wicked also, and the sinner*, are sometimes remarkably punished in this life; nations, families, particular persons. And if the righteous, who do not deserve the least reward, yet have part of their recompence here on earth, much more shall the wicked, who deserve the greatest punishment, have part of their punishment on earth, as an earnest of worse to come. Therefore *stand in awe, and sin not*. If those have two heavens that merit none, much more shall they have two hells that merit both.

C H A P. XII.

1. **W**Hoso loveth instruction, loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof, is brutish.

We are here taught to try whether we have grace or no, by enquiring how we stand affected to the means of grace.

1. Those that have grace, and love it, will delight in all the instructions that are given them by way of counsel, admonition, or reproof, by the word, or providence of God; will value a good education, and think it not a hardship, but a happiness, to be under a strict and prudent discipline. They that love a faithful ministry, that value it, and sit under it with pleasure, make it to appear they *love knowledge*.

2. Those shew themselves not only void of grace, but void of common sense, that take it as an affront to be told of their faults, and an imposition upon their liberty, to be put in mind of their duty. *He that hateth reproof*, is not only foolish, but *brutish*, like the horse, and the mule, that have no understanding, or the ox, that kicks against the goad. Those that desire to live in loose families and societies, where they may be under no check; that stifle the

the convictions of their own consciences, and count those their enemies that tell them the truth; are the *brutish* here meant.

2. A good *man* obtaineth favour of the LORD; but a man of wicked devices will he condemn.

Note, 1. We are really as we are with God. Those are happy, truly happy, for ever happy, that *obtain favour of the Lord*, though the world frown upon them, and they find little favour with men; for in God's favour is life, and that is the fountain of all good. On the other hand, those are miserable whom *he condemns*, however men may applaud them, and cry them up; whom he condemns, he condemns to the second death.

2. We are with God as we are with men; as we have our conversation in this world: Our Father judges of his children very much by their carriage one to another, and therefore a good man that is merciful and charitable, and doth good, he *draws out favour from the Lord* by his prayers; but a malicious man, that deviseth wickedness against his neighbour, *he will condemn*, as unworthy of a place in his kingdom.

3. A man shall not be established by wickedness: but the root of the righteous shall not be moved.

Note, 1. Though men may advance themselves by sinful arts, they cannot by such arts settle and secure themselves; though they may get broad estates, they cannot get long ones: *A man shall not be established by wickedness*; it may set them in high places, but they are slippery places, *Psalms lxxiii. 18.* That prosperity which is raised by sin, is built on the sand, and so it will soon appear.

2. Though good men may have but little of the world, yet that little will last, and what is honestly got will wear well: *The root of the righteous shall not be moved*, though their branches may be shaken. Those that by faith are rooted in Christ, are firmly fixed; in him their comfort and happiness is so rooted, as never to be rooted up.

4. A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed, is as rottenness in his bones.

Note, 1. He that is blessed with a good wife, is as happy as if he were upon the throne, for she is no less than a crown to him. A virtuous woman, that is plous and prudent, ingenious and industrious; that is active for the good of her family, and looks well to the ways of her household; that makes conscience of her duty in every relation; a woman of spirit, that can bear crosses without disturbance; such a one owns her husband for her head, and therefore she is a crown to him; not only a credit and honour to him, as a crown is an ornament, but supports and keeps up his authority in his family, as a crown is an ensign of power. She is submissive and faithful to him, and thereby teaches his children and servants to be so too.

2. He that is plagued with an ill wife, is as miserable as if he were upon the dunghil; for she is no better than rottenness in his bones, an incurable disease; besides that, *she makes him ashamed*. She that is sly and slothful, wasteful and wanton, passionate and ill tongued, ruins both the credit and comfort of her husband; if he go abroad, his head is hung down, for his wife's faults turn to his reproach; if he retire into himself, his heart is sunk; he is continually uneasy: It is an affliction that preys much upon the spirits.

5. The thoughts of the righteous are right: but the counsels of the wicked are deceit.

Note, 1. The word of God is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and judgeth them: We mistake, if we imagine that thoughts are free; no, they are under the divine cognizance, and therefore under the divine command. 2. We ought to be observers of the thoughts and intents of our own hearts, and to judge of ourselves by them; for they are the first-born of the soul, that have most of its image undisguised. Right thoughts are a righteous man's best evidences, as nothing more certainly proves a man wicked, than wicked contrivances and designs. A good man may have in his mind bad suggestions, but he doth not indulge them and harbour them, till they are ripened into ill projects and resolutions.

3. It is a man's honour to mean honestly, and to have his thoughts right, though a word or action may be misplaced, or mistimed, or, at least, misinterpreted: But it is a man's shame to lie always at catch, to act with deceit, with trick and design; not only with a long reach, but with an over-reach.

6. The words of the wicked are to lie in wait for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them.

In the foregoing verse, the thoughts of the wicked and righteous were compared, here their words, and those are as the abundance of the heart is.

1. Wicked people speak mischief to their neighbours, and wicked indeed those are whose words are to lie in wait for blood, their tongues are swords to those that stand in their way, to good men whom they hate and persecute. See an instance, *Luke xx. 20, 21.*

2. Good men speak help to their neighbours. The mouth of the upright is ready to be opened in the cause of those that are oppressed, *Prov. xxxi. 8.* to plead for them, to witness for them, and so to deliver them, particularly them whom the wicked lie in wait for. A man may sometimes do a very good work with one good word.

7. The wicked are overthrown, and are not: but the house of the righteous shall stand.

We are here taught as before, *ver. 3.* and *chap. x. 25, 30.*

1. That the triumphing of the wicked is short; they may be exalted for a while, but in a little time they are overthrown and are not; their trouble proves their overthrow, and they who made a great shew disappear, and their place knows them no more. Turn the wicked, and they are not; they stand in such a slippery place, that the least touch of trouble brings them down; like the apples of Sodom which look fair, but touch them and they go to dust.

2. That the prosperity of the righteous has a good bottom, and will endure. Death will remove them, but their house shall stand, their families shall be kept up, and the generation of the upright shall be blessed.

8. A man shall be commended according to his wisdom: but he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised.

We are here told whence to expect a good name. Reputation is what most have a mighty regard to, and stand much upon. Now it is certain,

1. The best reputation is that which attends virtue and serious piety, and the prudent conduct of life. A man shall be commended by all that are wise and good, in conformity to the judgment of God himself, which we are sure is according to truth, not according to his riches or preferments, his craft and subtilty, but according to his wisdom, the honesty of his designs, and the prudent choice of means to compass them.

2. The worst reproach is that which follows wickedness, and an opposition to that which is good. He that is of a perverse heart, that turns aside to crooked ways, and goes on frowardly in them, he shall be despised; providence will bring him to poverty and contempt, and all that have a true sense of honour will despise him as unworthy to be dealt with, and unfit to be trusted, and a blemish and scandal to mankind.

9. He that is despised and hath a servant, is better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread.

Note, 1. It is the folly of some, that they covet to make a great figure abroad, take place, and take state as persons of quality, and yet want necessities at home, and if their debts were paid, would not be worth a morsel of bread, nay, perhaps, pinch their bellies to put it on their backs, that they may appear very gay, because fine feathers make fine birds.

2. The condition and character of those is every way better, who content themselves in a lower sphere, where they are despised for the plainness of their dress, and the meanness of their post, that they may be able to afford themselves, not only necessities, but conveniences in their own houses, not only bread, but a servant to attend them, and take some of their work off their hands. They that contrive to live plentifully and comfortably at home, are to be preferred before those that affect nothing so much as to appear splendid abroad, though they have not wherewithal to maintain it, whose hearts are unhumiliated when their condition is low.

10. A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

See here, 1. To how great a degree a good man will be merciful; he has not only a compassion for the human nature under its greatest abasements, but he regardeth even the life of his beast, not only because it is his servant, but because it is God's creature, and in conformity to providence which preserveth man and beast. The beasts that are under our care must be provided for, must have convenient food and rest, must in no case be abused or tyrannized over; Balaam was checked for beating his ass. The law took care for oxen. Those therefore are unrighteous men that are not just to the brute-creatures; those that are furious and barbarous to them, evidence and confirm in themselves a habit of barbarity, and help to make the creation groan, *Rom. viii. 22.*

2. To how great a degree a wicked man will be unmerciful; even his tender mercies are cruel, i. e. that natural compassion which is in him, as a man, is lost, and by the power of corruption is turned into hard-heartedness, even that which they will have to pass for compassion is really cruel, as Pilate's resolution concerning Christ

Christ the innocent, *I will chastise him and let him go.* Their pretended kindnesses are only a cover for intended cruelties.

11. He that tilleth his land, shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain persons, is void of understanding.

Note, 1. It is mens wisdom to mind their business, and follow an honest calling, for that is the way, by the blessing of God, to get a livelihood; *He that tills his land*, of which he is either the owner or the occupant, that keeps to his work, and is willing to take pains, if he do not raise an estate by it, (what needs that?) yet he shall be *satisfied with bread*, shall have food convenient for himself and his family, enough to bear his charges comfortably through the world. Even the sentence of wrath has this mercy in it, thou shalt *eat bread*, though it be *in the sweat of thy face*. Cain was denied this, *Gen. iv. 12.* Be busy, and that is the true way to be easy; keep thy shop, and thy shop will keep thee. *Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands.*

2. It is mens folly to neglect their business, they are *void of understanding* that do so, for then they fall in with idle companions, and follow them in their ill courses, and so come to want bread, at least bread of their own, and make themselves burthensome to others; eating the bread out of other peoples mouths.

12. The wicked desireth the net of evil men: but the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit.

See here, 1. What is the care and aim of a wicked man, he would do mischief; he *desires the net of evil men*; O that I were but as cunning as such a man, to make a hand of those I deal with, that I had but his art of over-reaching, that I could but take my revenge on one I have a spite to, as effectually as he can; he desireth the *strong-hold or fortrefs* of evil men, so some read it, to act securely in doing mischief, that it may not turn upon him.

2. What is the care and aim of a good man; his *root yieldeth fruit*, and is his strength and stability, and that is it that he desires, to do good, and to be fixed and confirmed in doing good. The wicked desires only a net wherewith to fish for himself, the righteous desires to yield fruit for the benefit of others, and God's glory, *Rom. xiv. 6.*

13. The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips: but the just shall come out of trouble.

See here, 1. The wicked entangling themselves in trouble by their folly, when God in justice leaves them to themselves: They are often *snared by the transgression of their lips*, and their throats are cut with their own tongues; by *speaking evil of dignities*, they expose themselves to publick justice, by giving ill language they become obnoxious to private resentments, are sued for defamation, and actions on the case for words, are brought against them. Many a man has paid dear in this world for the transgression of his lips; and has felt the lash on his back for want of a bridle upon his tongue, *Psal. lxiv. 8.*

2. The righteous extricating themselves out of trouble by their own wisdom, when God in mercy comes in for their succour: *The just shall come out* of such troubles as the wicked throw themselves headlong into; it is intimated, that the just may, perhaps, come into trouble; but *though they fall, they shall not be utterly cast down*, *Psal. xxxiv. 19.*

14. A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth, and the recompence of a mans hands shall be rendred unto him.

We are here assured for our quickning to every good word and work,

1. That even good works will turn to a good account, *ver 14.* *A man shall be satisfied with good*, i. e. he shall gain present comfort, that inward pleasure which is truly satisfied by *the fruit of his mouth*, i. e. by the good he doth with his pious discourse, and prudent advice. While we are teaching others, we may ourselves learn, and feed on that bread of life we break to others.

2. That good works, much more, will be abundantly rewarded. *The recompence of a mans hands* for all his work and labour of love, all he has done for the glory of God, and the good of his generation *shall be rendred unto him*, and he shall reap as he hath sown. Or it may be understood of the general rule of justice, God will *render to every man according to his work*, *Rom. ii. 6.*

15. The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.

See here, 1. What it is that keeps a fool from being wise; *his way is right in his own eyes*, he thinks he is in the right in every thing he doth, and therefore asks no advice, because he doth not apprehend he needs it; is confident he knows the way, and cannot miss it, and therefore never enquires the way. The rule he goes by, is to do that which is *right in his own eyes*, to walk in

the way of his heart, *quicquid libet licet*; he is a fool that is governed by his eye, and not by his conscience.

2. What it is that keeps a wise man from being a fool; he is willing to be advised, desires to have counsel given him, and *hearkens to counsel*, being diffident of his own judgment, and having a value for the directions of those that are wise and good. He is wise, it is a sign he is so, and he is likely to continue so, whose ear is always open to good advice.

16. A fools wrath is presently known: but a prudent man covereth shame.

Note, 1. Passion is folly. *A fool is known by his anger*; so some read it; not but that a wise man may be angry when there is just cause for it, but then he has his anger under check and direction, is *Lord of his anger*, whereas a fool's anger lords it over him. He, that when he is provoked breaks out into indecent expressions in words or behaviour, whose passion alters his countenance, makes him outrageous, and forget himself, Nabal certainly is his name, and *folly is with him*. *A fools indignation is known in the day*, he proclaims it openly whatever company he is in; or, it is known in the day he is provoked, he cannot defer shewing his resentments. Those that are soon angry, that are presently put into a flame by the least spark, have not that rule which they ought to have of their own spirits.

2. Meekness is wisdom. *A prudent man covereth shame*, i. e. 1. He covers the passion that is in his own breast; when his *spirit is stirred*, and his *heart hot within him*, he keeps his mouth as with a bridle, and suppresseth his resentments, by smothering and stifling them. Anger is shame, and though a wise man be not perfectly free from it, yet he is ashamed of it, rebukes it, and suffers not the evil spirit to speak. 2. He covers the provocation that is given him, the indignity that is done him, winks at it, covers it as much as may be from himself, that he may not carry his resentments of it too far. It is a kindness to ourselves, and contributes to the repose of our own minds, to extenuate and excuse the injuries and affronts that we receive, instead of aggravating them, and making the worst of them, as we are apt to do.

17. He that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness: but a false witness deceit.

Here is, 1. A *faithful witness* commended for an honest man. *He that makes conscience of speaking truth*, and representing every thing fairly to the best of his knowledge, whether in judgment or in common converse, whether he be upon his oath or no, he *sheweth forth righteousness*, he makes it to appear that he is governed and acted by the principles and laws of righteousness; and he promotes justice by doing honour to it, and serving the administration of it. 2. A *false witness* condemned for a cheat, he *sheweth forth deceit*, not only how little conscience he makes of deceiving those he deals with, but how much pleasure he takes in it, and that he is possessed by a lying spirit, *Jer. ix. 3, 4, 5.* We are all concerned to possess ourselves with a dread and detestation of the sin of lying, *Psal. cxix. 163.* and a reigning principle of honesty.

18. There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword; but the tongue of the wise is health.

The tongue is death or life, poison or medicine, as it is used.

1. There are words that are cutting and killing, that are *like the piercings of a sword*; opprobrious words grieve the spirits of those to whom they are spoken, and cut them to the heart; slanders, like a sword, wound the reputation of those of whom they are uttered, and perhaps incurably; whisperings and evil surmises, like a sword, divide and cut asunder the bonds of love and friendship, and separate those that have been dearest to each other.

2. There are words that are curing and healing; the *tongue of the wise is health*, closing up those wounds which the backbiting tongue had given, licking all whole again, restoring peace, and accommodating matters in variance, and persuading to reconciliation. Wisdom will find out proper remedies against the mischiefs that are made by detraction and evil-speaking.

19. The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment.

Be it observed to the honour of truth, that sacred thing,

1. That if truth be spoken it will hold good, and whoever may be disoblged by it, and angry at it, yet it will keep its ground, great is the truth and will prevail; what is true will be always true, we may abide by it, and need not fear being disproved and put to shame.

2. That if truth be denied, yet in time it will out; a *lying tongue* that puts false colours upon things, is but for a moment, the lie will be disproved; the liar when he comes to be examined will be found in several stories, and not constant to himself, as he is that speaks truth; and when he is found in a lie he cannot gain his point, nor will he afterwards be credited. Truth may be eclipsed, but it will come to light. Those therefore that make a lie their refuge, will find it a refuge of lies.

20. Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil: but to the counsellors of peace is joy.

Note, 1. Those that devise mischief for the accomplishing of it, contrive how to impose upon others, but it will prove in the end, that they deceive themselves. They that *imagine evil* under colour of friendship, have their hearts full of this and the other advantage and satisfaction which they shall gain by it, but it is all a cheat. Let them imagine it never so artfully, deceivers will be deceived.

2. Those that consult the good of their neighbours, that study the things which make for peace, and give peaceable advice; promote healing attempts, and contrive healing methods, and according as their sphere is, further the publick welfare; will have not only the credit but the comfort of it, to them there is joy and success, perhaps beyond their expectation. Blessed are the peacemakers.

21. There shall no evil happen to the just: but the wicked shall be filled with mischief.

Note, 1. Piety is a sure protection. If men be sincerely righteous, the righteous God has engaged that no evil shall happen to them; he will by the power of his grace in them, that principle of justice keep them from the evil of sin; so that though they be tempted, yet they shall not be overcome by the temptation. And though they may come into trouble; into many troubles, yet to them those troubles shall have no evil in them, whatever they have to others; *Psal. xci. 10.* for they shall be over-ruled to work for their good.

2. Wickedness is as sure a destruction. They that live in contempt of God and man, that are set on mischief, with mischief they shall be filled. They shall be more and more mischievous, shall be filled with all unrighteousness, *Rom. i. 29.* Or, they shall be made miserable with the mischiefs that shall come upon them. They that delight in mischief shall have enough of it. Some read the whole verse thus; *There shall no evil happen to the just, though the wicked be filled with mischief* and spite against them: They shall be safe under the protection of heaven; though hell it self break loose upon them.

22. Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.

We are here taught,

1. To hate lying, and to keep at the utmost distance from it, because it is an abomination to the Lord, and renders those abominable in his sight that allow themselves in it; not only because it is a breach of his law; but because it is destructive to humane society.

2. To make conscience of truth, not only in our words, but in all our actions, because those that *deal truly* and sincerely, in all their dealings, are *his delight*; and he is well pleased with them. We delight to converse with, and make use of those that are honest, and that we may put a confidence in; such therefore let us be, that we may recommend ourselves to the favour both of God and man.

23. A prudent man concealeth knowledge: but the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness.

Note, 1. He that is wise doth not affect to proclaim his wisdom, and it is his honour that he doth not; he communicates his knowledge when it may turn to the edification of others, but he conceals it, when the shewing of it would only tend to his own commendation. Knowing men, if they be prudent men, will carefully avoid every thing that favours of ostentation, and not take all occasions to shew their learning and reading, but only to use it for good purposes, and then let *their own works praise them.* *Ars est celare artem.*

2. He that is foolish cannot avoid proclaiming his folly, and it is his shame that he cannot. *The heart of fools* by their foolish words and actions *proclaimeth foolishness*; either they do not desire to hide it, so little sense have they of good and evil, honour and dishonour, or they know not how to hide it, so little discretion have they in the management of themselves, *Ecc. x. 3.*

24. The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute.

Note, 1. Industry is the way to preferment. Solomon advanced Jeroboam, because he saw that he was an industrious young man, and minded his business, *1 Kings xi. 28.* Men that take pains in study and serviceableness, will thereby gain such an interest and reputation, as will give them a dominion over all about them, by which means many have risen strangely. He that has been *faithful in a few things* shall be made ruler over many things. The elders that *labour in the word and doctrine*, are worthy of double honour; and those that are diligent when they are young, will get that which will enable them to rule and so to rest when they are old.

2. Knavery is the way to slavery. *The slothful* and careless, or rather the deceitful, for so the word signifies, *shall be under tribute.* Those that because they will not take pains in an honest calling; live by their shifts, and arts of dishonesty are paltry and beggarly; and will be kept under. They that are diligent and honest when they are apprentices will come to be masters; but those that are otherwise are the fools, which all their days must be *servants to the wife in heart.*

25. Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.

Here is, 1. The cause and consequence of melancholy. It is *Heaviness in the heart*, it is a load of care, and fear, and sorrow upon the spirits, depressing them, and disabling to exert themselves with any vigour in what is to be done; or courage in what is to be born, it makes them stoop; prostrates and sinks them. Those that are thus oppressed can neither do the duty, nor take the comfort of any relation, condition, or conversation; It is that which those that are inclined to it should therefore watch and pray against.

2. The cure of it; *A good word* from God; applied by faith; *maketh it glad*, such a word as that (saith one of the rabbins) *Cast thy burthen upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee*; the good word of God, particularly the gospel, is designed to make the hearts glad that are weary and heavy laden, *Matth. xi. 28.* Ministers are to be helpers of this joy.

26. The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour: but the way of the wicked seduceth them.

See here, 1. That good men do well for themselves; for they have in themselves an excellent character, and they secure to themselves an excellent portion; and in both they excel other people; *the righteous is more abundant than his neighbour*, so the margin; he is richer, though not in this world's goods, yet in the graces and comforts of the Spirit; which are the true riches. There is a true excellency in religion, it ennobles men, inspires them with generous principles, makes them substantial; it is an excellency which is in the sight of God of great price; who is the true judge of excellency. His neighbour may make a greater figure in the world; may be more applauded, but the righteous man has the intrinsic worth.

2. That wicked men do ill for themselves; they walk in a way which seduceth them. It seems to them to be not only a pleasant way; but the right way, it is so agreeable to flesh and blood; that they therefore flatter themselves with an opinion that it cannot be amiss; but they will not gain the point they aim at, nor enjoy the good they hope for. It is all a cheat; and therefore the righteous is wiser and happier than his neighbours, that yet despise him, and trample upon him.

27. The slothful man roseth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious.

Here is, 1. That which may make us hate slothfulness and deceit, (for the word here as before signifies both.) The slothful deceitful man has rost-meat, but that which he rosts is not what he himself *took in hunting*, no, it is what others took pains for, and he lives upon the fruit of their labours; like the drones in the hive. Or, if the slothful deceitful man has taken any thing by hunting; (as sportsmen are seldom men of business) yet they do not rost it when they have taken it; they have no comfort in the enjoyment of it; perhaps God in his providence cuts them short of it.

2. That which may make us in love with industry and honesty; that the *substance of a diligent man*, though it be not great, perhaps, yet it is *precious*. It comes from the blessing of God; he hath comfort in it; it doth him good; and his family. It is his own daily bread, not bread out of other peoples mouths, and therefore he he sees God gives it him in answer to his prayer.

28. In the way of righteousness is life, and in the path-way thereof there is no death.

The way of religion is here recommended to us,

1. As a straight, plain, easy way; it is *the way of righteousness*, God's commands, the rule we are to walk by are all holy, just, and good, religion has right reason and equity on its side; it is a *path-way*, a way which God has cast up for us, *Isa. xxxv. 8.* it is a high-way, the king's high-way, the King of kings high-way. A way which is tracked before us by all the saints; the good old way; full of the footsteps of the flock.

2. As a safe, pleasant, comfortable way. (1.) There is not only life at the end, but there is life in the way; all true comfort and satisfaction. The favour of God, which is better than life; the Spirit who is life. (2.) There is not only life in it, but so as that in it *there is no death*. None of that sorrow of the world which worketh death, and is an alloy to our present joy and life. No end of that life that is in the way of righteousness. Here there is life but

but there is death too : *In the way of righteousness there is life, and no death* : life and immortality.

C H A P. XIII.

1. **A** Wife son *heareth* his fathers instruction : but a scorned *heareth* not rebuke.

Among the children of the same parents, it is no new thing for some to be hopeful, and others the contrary ; now here we are taught to distinguish.

1. There is great hopes of those that have a reverence for their parents, and are willing to be advised and admonished by them. He is a *wife son*, and is in a fair way to be wiser, that *heareth his father's instruction*, desires to hear it, regards it, and complies with it, and doth not only give it the hearing.

2. There is little hopes of those that will not so much as *hear rebuke* with any patience, but scorn to submit to government, and scoff at those that deal friendly with them. How can those mend of a fault who will not be told of it, but count those their enemies who do them that kindness.

2. A man shall eat good by the fruit of *his* mouth : but the soul of the transgressors *shall* eat violence.

Note, 1. If that which comes from within out of the heart be good, and from a good treasure, it will return with advantage. Inward comfort and satisfaction will be daily bread ; nay, it will be a continual feast to those who delight in that communication which is *to the use of edifying*.

2. Violence done, will recoil in the face of him that doth it. *The soul of the transgressors*, that harbours and plots mischief, and vents it by word and deed, *shall eat violence* ; they shall have their belly full of it. *Reward her as she has rewarded thee*, Rev. xviii.

6. Every man shall drink as he brews ; eat as he speaks ; for by our words we must be justified or condemned, *Matt. xii. 37.* as our fruit is, so will our food be, *Rom. vi. 21, 22.*

3. He that keepeth his mouth, keepeth his life : but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.

Note, 1. A guard upon the lips is a guard to the soul ; he that is cautious what he saith, that thinks twice before he speaks once ; that, if he have *thought evil*, *layeth his hand upon his mouth* to suppress it ; that keeps a strong bridle on his tongue, and a strict hand on that bridle, he *keeps his soul* from a great deal both of guilt and grief, and saves himself the trouble of many bitter reflections on himself, and others upon him.

2. There is many a one ruined by an ungoverned tongue. *He that opens wide his lips*, to let out every thing that comes uppermost, *quicquid in buccam venerit*, that loves to bawl and bluster, and make a noise, and affects such a liberty of speech, as bids defiance both to God and man, he *shall have destruction*. It will be the destruction of his reputation, his interest, his comfort, and his soul for ever, *Jam. iii. 6.*

4. The soul of the sluggard desireth, and *hath* nothing : but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

Here is, 1. The misery and shame of the slothful ; see how foolish and absurd they are ; they desire the gains which the diligent get, but they hate the pains which the diligent take ; they covet every thing that is to be coveted, but will do nothing that is to be done ; and therefore it follows, they have nothing ; for he that will not labour, let him hunger, and let him not *eat*, 2 *Theff. iii. 3.* *The desire of the slothful*, which should be his excitement, is his torment, which should make him busy, makes him always uneasy, and is really a greater toil to him than labour would be.

2. The happiness and honour of the diligent : *Their soul shall be made fat* ; they shall have abundance, and shall have the comfortable enjoyment of it ; and the more for its being the fruit of their diligence. This is especially true in spiritual affairs : They that rest in idle wishes, know not what the advantages of religion are ; whereas they that take pains in the service of God, find both the pleasure and profit of it.

5. A righteous man hateth lying : but a wicked man is lothsome, and cometh to shame.

Note, 1. Where grace reigns sin is lothsome : It is the undoubted character of every *righteous man*, that he *hates lying*, i. e. all sin, for every sin is a lie, and particularly all fraud and falsehood in commerce and conversation : Not only that he will not tell a lie, but he abhors it, from a rooted, reigning principle of love to truth and justice, and conformity to God.

2. Where sin reigns the man is lothsome : If his eyes were opened, and his conscience awakened, he would be so to himself ; he would *abhor himself*, and *repent in dust and ashes* ; however, he is so to God, and all good men ; particularly, he makes himself so by lying, than which nothing more detestable ; And though he

may think to face it out a while, yet he will *come to shame* and contempt at last, and will blush to shew his face, *Dan. xii. 2.*

6. Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way : but wickedness overthroweth the sinner.

See here, 1. Saints secured from ruin. Those that are *upright in their way*, that mean honestly in all their actions, adhere conscientiously to the sacred and eternal rules of equity, and deal sincerely both with God and man, their integrity will keep them from the temptations of Satan, which shall not prevail over them, the reproaches and injuries of evil men, which shall not fasten upon them, to do them any real mischief : *Hic murus abeneus esto, nil conscire sibi*, Psalm xxv. 21.

2. Sinners secured for ruin. Those that are wicked, even their wickedness will be their overthrow at last, and they are held in the cords of it in the mean time. Are they corrected, destroyed ? It is their own wickedness that corrects them, that destroys them ; they alone shall bear it.

7. There is that maketh himself rich, yet *hath* nothing : there is that maketh himself poor, yet *hath* great riches.

This observation is applicable,

1. To mens worldly estate. The world is a great cheat ; not only the things of the world, but the men of the world ; *all men are liars*. Here is an instance in two fore evils under the sun : (1.) Some that are really poor would be thought to be rich, and are thought to be so ; they trade and spend as if they were rich, make a great bustle, and a great shew, as if they had hid treasures, when, perhaps, if all their debts were paid, they are not worth a groat. This is sin, and will be shame, many a one hereby ruins his family, and brings reproach upon his profession of religion. They that thus live above what they have, choose to be subject to their own pride rather than to God's providence, and it will end accordingly. (2.) Some that are really rich, would be thought to be poor, and are thought to be so ; because they sordidly and sneakingly live below what God has given them, and choose rather to bury it than to use it, *Eccl. vi. 1, 2.* In this there is ingratitude to God, injustice to the family and neighbourhood, and uncharitableness to the poor.

2. To their spiritual state. Grace is the riches of the soul, it is true riches, but men commonly misrepresent themselves, either designedly, or through mistake and ignorance of themselves. 1. There are many presuming hypocrites that are really poor and empty of grace, and yet, either think themselves rich, and will not be convinced of their poverty, or pretend themselves rich, and will not own their poverty. 2. There are many timorous, trembling christians, that are spiritually rich and full of grace, and yet think themselves poor, and will not be persuaded that they are rich, or at least will not own it : by their doubts and fears, their complaints and griefs, they *make themselves poor*. The former mistake is destroying at last, this is disquieting in the mean time.

8. The ransom of a mans life are his riches : but the poor heareth not rebuke.

We are apt to judge of mens blessedness, at least, in this world, by their wealth, and that they are more or less happy, according as they have more or less of this world's goods ; but Solomon here shews what a gross mistake it is ; that we may be reconciled to a poor condition, and may neither covet riches ourselves, nor envy those that have abundance.

1. Those that are rich, if by some they are respected for their riches, yet, to balance that, by others they are envied and struck at, and brought in danger of their lives, which therefore they are forced to ransom with their riches : *Slay us not, for we have treasures in the field*, Jer. xli. 8. Under some tyrants, it has been crime enough to be rich, and how little is a man beholden to his wealth, when it only serves to redeem that life which otherwise had not been exposed.

2. Those that are poor, if by some, that should be their friends, they are despised and over-looked, yet, to balance that, they are also despised and over-looked by others that would be their enemies if they had any thing to lose : *The poor heareth not rebuke* ; is not censured, reproached, accused, nor brought into trouble as the rich are ; for no body thinks it worth while to take notice of them. When the rich Jews were carried captives to Babylon, *the poor of the land were left*, 2 Kings xxv. 12. Fair fall nothing once in seven years. *Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator*.

9. The light of the righteous rejoiceth : but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.

Here is, 1. The comfort of good men flourishing and lasting : *The light of the righteous rejoiceth*, i. e. it increaseth, and makes them glad. Even their outward prosperity is their joy, and much more those gifts, graces, and comforts, with which their souls are illuminated ; these *shine more and more*, Prov. iv. 18. The Spirit is

is their light; and he gives them a fulness of joy; and rejoiceth to do them good.

2. The comfort of bad men withering and dying: *The lamp of the wicked* burns dim and faint, it looks melancholy, like a taper in an urn, and it will shortly be put out in utter darkness, *Isa. i.*

11. The light of the righteous is that of the sun, which may be eclipsed and clouded, but will continue; that of the wicked is as a lamp of their own kindling, which will presently go out, and is easily put out.

10. Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well-advised is wisdom.

Note, 1. Foolish pride is the great make-bait. Would you know whence come wars and fightings; they come from this root of bitterness: Whatever hand other lusts may have in contention; passion, envy, covetousness, pride has the great hand, it is its pride that it will itself sow discord, and needs no help. Pride makes men impatient of contradiction, either in their opinions or desires, impatient of competition and rivalry, impatient of contempt, or any thing that looks like a slight, and impatient of concession, and receding from a conceit of certain right and truth on their side; and hence arise quarrels among relations and neighbours, quarrels in states and kingdoms, in churches and christian societies. Men will be revenged, will not forgive, because they are proud.

2. Those that are humble and peaceable, are wise, and well-advised: Those that will ask and take advice, that will consult their own consciences, their bibles, their ministers, their friends, and will do nothing rashly, they are wise, as in other things, so in this, that they will humble themselves, will stoop and yield, to preserve quietness; and prevent quarrels.

11. Wealth gotten by vanity, shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour, shall increase.

This shews that riches wear as they are won and woven.

1. That which is won ill will never wear well, for there is a curse attends it, which will waste it; and the same corrupt dispositions which incline men to the sinful ways of getting, will incline them to the like sinful ways of spending. *Wealth gotten by vanity*, will be bestowed upon vanity, and then it will be diminished. That which is got by such employments as are not lawful, or not becoming christians, which only serve to feed pride and luxury; that which is got by gaming, or by the stage, may as truly be said to be gotten by vanity, as that which is got by fraud and lying, and will be diminished. *De male quæsitis vix gaudet tertius hæres.*

2. That which is got by industry and honesty will grow more instead of growing less; it will be a maintenance, it will be an inheritance, it will be an abundance: *He that laboureth, working with his hands, shall so increase*, as that he shall have to give to him that needeth, *Eph. iv. 28.* and when it comes to that, it will increase yet more and more.

12. Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.

Note, 1. Nothing is more grievous than the disappointment of a raised expectation, though not in the thing itself, by a denial, yet in the time of it, by a delay. *Hope deferred maketh the heart sick* and languishing, fretful and peevish; but hope quite dashed kills the heart dead, and the higher the expectation was raised, the more cutting is the frustration of it. It is therefore our wisdom not to promise ourselves any great matters from the creature, nor to feed ourselves with any vain hopes from this world, lest we lay up matter for our own vexation: And what we do hope for let us prepare to be disappointed, that if it should prove so, it may prove the easier; and be not hasty.

2. Nothing is more grateful than to enjoy that at last which we have long wished for and waited for. *When the desire doth come*, it puts men into a sort of paradise, a garden of pleasure, for it is a tree of life. It will aggravate the eternal misery of the wicked, that their hopes will be frustrated; and it will make the happiness of heaven the more welcome to the saints, that it is what they have earnestly longed for as the crown of their hopes.

13. Whoso despiseth the word, shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.

Here is, 1. The character of one that is marked for ruin: He that despiseth the word of God, and has no regard to it, no veneration for it, nor will be ruled by it, certainly he shall be destroyed; for he slighteth that which is the only means of curing a destructive disease, and makes himself obnoxious to that divine wrath which will certainly be his destruction. Those that prefer the rules of carnal policy before divine precepts, and the allurements of the world and the flesh before God's promises and comforts, despise his word, giving the preference to those things that stand in competition with it; and it is to their own just destruction, they would not take warning.

2. The character of one that is sure to be happy: *He that fear-*

eth the commandment, that stands in awe of God, pays a deference to his authority, has a reverence for his word, is afraid of displeasing God, and incurring the penalties annexed to the commandment, he shall not only escape destruction, but shall be rewarded for his godly fear. *In keeping the commandment there is great reward.*

14. The law of the wise is a fountain of life; to depart from the snares of death.

By the law of the wise and righteous, here we may understand, either the principles and rules by which they govern themselves; or (which comes all to one) the instructions which they give to others, which ought to be as a law to all about them; and if they be so,

1. They will be constant springs of comfort and satisfaction; as a fountain of life, sending forth streams of living water; the closer we keep to those rules, the more effectually we secure our own peace.

2. They will be constant preservatives from the temptations of Satan: They that follow the dictates of this law, will keep at a distance from the snares of sin, and so escape the snares of death, which they run themselves into, that forsake the law of the wise.

15. Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard.

If we compare not only the end, but the way, we shall find that religion has the advantage; for,

1. The way of saints is pleasant and agreeable: *Good understanding* gains favour with God and man; our Saviour grew in that favour, when he increased in wisdom. Those that carry themselves prudently, and order their conversation aright in every thing, that serve Christ in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the holy Ghost, are accepted of God, and approved of men, *Rom. xiv. 17, 18.* And how comfortably will that man pass through the world, who is well understood, and is therefore well accepted?

2. The way of sinners is rough and uneasy, and for that reason unpleasant to themselves, because unacceptable to others: It is hard, hard upon others who complain of it, hard to the sinner himself, who can have little enjoyment of himself, while he is doing that which is disobliging to all mankind. The service of sin is perfect slavery; and the road to hell is strewn with the thorns and thistles that are the products of the curse. Sinners labour in the very fire.

16. Every prudent man dealeth with knowledge: but a fool layeth open his folly.

Note, 1. It is wisdom to be cautious. *Every prudent* discreet man doth all with knowledge, i. e. considering with himself, and consulting with others, acts with deliberation, and is upon the reserve; is careful not to meddle with that which he has not some knowledge of, nor to launch out into business which he has not acquainted himself with; will not deal with those that he has not some knowledge of, whether they may be confided in. He is still dealing in knowledge, that he may increase the stock he hath.

2. It is folly to be rash as the fool is, who is forward to talk of things he knows nothing of, and undertake that which he is no way fit for, and so lays open his folly, and makes himself ridiculous: *He began to build, and was not able to finish.*

17. A wicked messenger falleth into mischief: but a faithful ambassador is health.

Here is, 1. The ill consequences of betraying a trust. *A wicked messenger* that being sent to negotiate any business, is false to him that employed him, divulgeth his counsels, and so defeats his designs; he cannot expect to prosper, but will certainly fall into some mischief or other, will be discovered and punished; since nothing is more hateful to God and man, than the treachery of those that have a confidence reposed in them.

2. The happy effects of fidelity. *An ambassador* that faithfully dischargeth his trust, and serves the interests of those that employed him, he is health, he is health to those by whom and for whom he is employed, heals differences that are between them, and preserves a good understanding: he is health to himself, for he secures his own interest. This is applicable to ministers, Christ's messengers and ambassadors; those that are wicked and false to Christ, and the souls of men, they do mischief, and fall into mischief; but those that are faithful will find sound words to be healing words, to others and themselves.

18. Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth instruction: but he that regardeth reproof, shall be honoured.

Note, 1. He that is so proud that he scorns to be taught, will certainly be abased. He that refuseth the good instruction offered him, as if it were a reflection upon his honour, and an abridgment of his liberty, poverty and shame shall be to him; he will become a beggar,

beggar, and live and die in disgrace: every one will despise him as foolish, and stubborn, and ungovernable.

2. He that is so humble that he takes it well to be told of his faults, shall certainly be exalted. *He that regardeth a reproof*, who ever gives it him, and will mend what is amiss when it is shewed him, he gains respect as wise and candid; he avoids that which would be a disgrace to him, and is in a fair way to make himself considerable.

19. The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul: but *it is* abomination to fools to depart from evil.

This shews the folly of those that refuse instruction, for they might be happy and will not.

1. They might be happy. There are in man strong desires of happiness; God has provided for the accomplishment of those desires, and that would be *sweet to the soul*, whereas the pleasures of sense are grateful only to the carnal appetite. *The desire* of good men towards the favour of God and spiritual blessings, bring that which is *sweet to their souls*; we know those that can say so by experience, *Psalms* iv. 6, 7.

2. Yet they will not be happy; for *it is* an abomination to them to depart from evil, which is necessary to their being happy. Never let those expect any thing truly sweet to their souls, that will not be persuaded to leave their sins, but roll them under their tongues as a sweet morsel.

20. He that walketh with wise men, shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

Note, 1. Those that would be good must keep good company; which is an evidence for them that they would be good; mens character is known by the company they choose; and will be a means of making them good, of shewing them the way, and of quickning and encouraging them in it. He that would be himself wise must walk with those that are so, must choose such for his intimate acquaintance, and converse with them accordingly; must ask and receive instruction from them, and keep up pious and profitable talk with them, *Ecclesiastes* viii. 9. *Miss not the discourse of the elders, for they also learned of their fathers.* And, *chap.* vi. 35. *Be willing to hear every godly discourse, and let not the parables of understanding escape thee.*

2. Multitudes are brought to ruin by bad company: *A companion of fools shall be broken*, so some; *shall be known*, so the Seventy; known to be a fool; *nosctur ex socio.* He will be like them, so some; *will be made wicked*, so others; it comes all to one; for all those, and those only, that make themselves wicked, will be destroyed; and those who associate with evil doers, are debauched, and so undone, and at last have laid their deaths upon it.

21. Evil pursueth sinners: but to the righteous, good shall be repayed.

Here see, 1. How unavoidable the destruction of sinners is; the wrath of God pursues them, and all the terrors of that wrath: *Evil pursues* them close wherever they go, as the avenger of blood pursued the manslayer, and they have no city of refuge to flee to; they attempt an escape, but in vain: Whom God pursues he is sure to overtake. They may prosper for a while, and grow very secure, but their damnation slumbers not, though they do.

2. How indefeasible the happiness of the saints is; the God that cannot lie hath engaged that *to the righteous, good shall be repayed*; they shall be abundantly recompensed for all the good they have done, and all the ill they have suffered in this world; so that though many have been losers for their righteousness, they shall not be losers by it. Though the recompence do not come quickly, it will come in the day of payment in the world of retribution; and it will be an abundant recompence.

22. A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.

See here, 1. How a good man's estate lasts; he leaves an inheritance to his children's children: It is part of his praise, that he is thoughtful for posterity; that he doth not lay all out upon himself, but is in care to do well for those that come after him; not by withholding more than is meet, but by a prudent and decent frugality: He trains up his children to this, that they may leave it to their children; and especially he is careful, both by justice and charity, to obtain the blessing of God upon what he hath, and to entail that upon his children, without which the greatest industry and frugality will be in vain. A good man, by being good, and doing good, by honouring the Lord with his substance, and spending it in his service, secures it to his posterity; or if he should not leave them much of this world's goods, his prayers, his instructions, his good example, will be the best entail; and the promises of the covenant will be an inheritance to his children's children, *Psalms* ciii. 17.

2. How it encreases by the accession of the wealth of the sinner

to it, for that is laid up for the just. If it be asked, How should good men grow so rich, who are not so eager upon the world as others are, and who commonly suffer for their well doing? it is here answered, That God, in his providence, often brings into their hands that which wicked people had laid up for themselves. *The innocent shall divide the silver*, *Job* xxvii. 16, 17. *The Israelites shall spoil the Egyptians*, *Exod.* xii. 36. and *eat the riches of the Gentiles*, *Isa.* lxi. 6.

23. Much food is in the tillage of the poor: but there is that is destroyed for want of judgment.

See here, 1. How a small estate may be improved by industry, so that a man, by making the best of every thing, may live comfortably upon it. *Much food is in the tillage of the poor*, the poor farmers, that have but a little, but take pains with that little, and husband it well. Many make it an excuse for their idleness, that they have but a little to work on, a very little to be doing with; but the less compass the field is of, the more let the skill and labour of the owner be employed about it, and it will turn to a very good account. Let him dig, and he needs not beg.

2. How a great estate may be ruined by indiscretion: *There is that hath a great deal*, but it is destroyed, and brought to nothing, for want of judgment, i. e. prudence in the management of it: Men over-build themselves, or over-buy themselves; keep greater company, or a better table, or more servants, than they can afford; suffer what they have to go to decay, and do not make the most of it; by taking up money themselves, or being bound for others, their estates are sunk, their families reduced, and all for want of judgment.

24. He that spareth his rod, hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

Note, 1. To the education of children in that which is good, there is necessary a due correction of them for what is amiss; every child of ours is a child of Adam, and therefore has that foolishness bound up in its heart, which calls for rebuke, more or less; that rod and reproof which give wisdom. Observe, it is his rod that must be used, the rod of a parent, directed by wisdom and love, and designed for good; not the rod of a servant.

2. It is good to begin betimes with the necessary restraints of children from that which is evil, before vicious habits are confirmed: The branch is easily bended when it is tender.

3. Those really hate their children, though they pretend to be fond of them, that do not keep them under a strict discipline, and by all proper methods, severe ones, when gentle ones will not serve, make them sensible of their faults, and afraid of offending. They abandon them to their worst enemy, to the most dangerous disease, and therefore hate them. Let this reconcile children to the correction their good parents give them; it is from love, and for their good, *Heb.* xii. 7, 8, 9.

25. The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul: but the belly of the wicked shall want.

Note, 1. It is the happiness of the righteous that they shall have enough, and that they know when they have enough. They desire not to be surfeited, but, being moderate in their desires, they are soon satisfied. Nature is content with a little, and grace with less; enough is as good as a feast. They that feed on the bread of life, that feast on the promises, meet with abundant satisfaction of soul there; eat and are filled.

2. It is the misery of the wicked that, through the insatiableness of their own desires, they are always needy; not only their souls shall not be satisfied with the world and the flesh, but even their belly shall want; their sensual appetite is always craving. In hell they shall be denied a drop of water.

C H A P. XIV.

1. Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.

Note, 1. A good wife is a great blessing to a family; by a fruitful wife a family is multiplied, and replenished with children, and so built up; but by a prudent wife, one that is pious, and industrious and considerate, the affairs of the family are made to prosper, debts are paid, portions raised, provision made, the children well educated and maintained, and the family has comfort within doors, and credit without; thus is the house built. She looks upon it as her own to take care of, though she knows it is her husband's to bear rule in, *Ester* i. 22.

2. There is many a family brought to ruin by ill housewifery, as well as by ill husbandry. A foolish woman that has no fear of God, nor regard to her business; that is wilful, and wasteful, and humourfome; that indulgeth her ease and appetite, and is all for jaunting and junketing, cards and the play-house; though she come to a plentiful estate, and to a family beforehand, she will impoverish and waste it, and will as certainly be the ruin of her house, as if

if she plucked it down with her hands; and the husband himself with all his care can scarce prevent it.

2. He that walketh in his uprightness, feareth the LORD: but he that is perverse in his ways, despiseth him.

Here is, 1. Grace and sin in their true colours. Grace reigning is a reverence of God, and gives honour to him who is infinitely great and high, and to whom all honour is due, than which what is more becoming, or should be more pleasing to the rational creature. Sin reigning is no less than a contempt of God; in this more than in any thing sin appears exceeding sinful, that it despiseth God, whom angels adore. They that despise God's precepts, and will not be ruled by them; his promises, and will not accept of them, despise God himself, and all his attributes.

2. Grace and sin in their true light. By this we may know a man that has grace, and the fear of God reigning in him, he walks in his uprightness, he makes conscience of his actions, is faithful both to God and man, and every step he makes, as well as every step he takes, is by rule: Here is one that honours God. But, on the contrary, he that is perverse in his ways, that wilfully follows his own appetites and passions; that is unjust and dishonest, and contradicts his profession in his conversation; however he may pretend to devotion, he is a wicked man, and will be reckoned with as a despiser of God himself.

3. In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them.

See here, 1. A proud fool exposing himself. Where there is pride in the heart, and no wisdom in the head to suppress it, it commonly shews it self in the words: *In the mouth there is pride*, proud boasting, proud censuring, proud scorning, proud commanding, and giving law; this is the rod, or branch of pride (the word is used only here, and *Isa. xi. 1.*) It grows from that root of bitterness which is in the heart; it is a rod from that stem: The root must be plucked up, or we cannot conquer this branch; or it is meant of a smiting, beating rod; a rod of pride which strikes others. The proud man with his tongue lays about him, and deals blows at pleasure, but it will in the end be a rod to himself; the proud man shall come under an ignominious correction by the words of his own mouth; not cut as a soldier, but caned as a servant; and herein he shall be beaten with his own rod, *Psal. lxiv. 8.*

2. A humble wife man saving himself, and consulting his own good: *The lips of the wise shall preserve them*, from doing that mischief to others, which proud men do with their tongues, and from bringing that mischief on themselves, which haughty scorers are oft involved in.

4. Where no oxen are, the crib is clean: but much increase is by the strength of the ox.

Note, 1. The neglect of husbandry is the way to poverty: *Where no oxen are*, to till the ground, and tread out the corn, the crib is empty, is clean, there is no straw for the cattle, and consequently no bread for the service of man. Scarcity is represented by *cleanness of teeth*, *Amos iv. 6.* *Where no oxen are*, there is nothing to be done at the ground, and then nothing to be had out of it; the crib indeed is clean from dung, which pleaseth the neat and nice, that cannot endure husbandry, because there is so much dirty work in it, and therefore will sell their oxen to keep the crib clean; but then not only the labour, but even the dung of the ox is wanted. This shews the folly of those who addict themselves to the pleasures of the country, but do not mind the business of it; that (as we say) keep more horses than kine, more dogs than swine; their families must needs suffer by it.

2. Those that take pains about their ground, are likely to reap the profit of it; who keep that about them which is for use and service, not for state and shew, more husbandmen than footmen, they are likely to thrive: *Much increase is by the strength of the ox*, that is made for our service, and is profitable alive and dead.

5. A faithful witness will not lie: but a false witness will utter lies.

In the administration of justice much depends upon the witnesses, and therefore it is necessary to the common good that witnesses be principled as they ought to be; for,

1. A witness that is conscientious will not dare to give in a testimony that is in the least untrue; nor for good-will, or ill-will, represent a thing otherwise than according to the best of his knowledge; whoever is pleased or displeased; and then judgment runs down like a river.

2. But a witness that will be bribed and biased, and brow-beaten, will utter lies, and not stick at it, nor startle at it, with as much readiness and assurance, as if it were all true.

6. A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not; but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth.

Note, 1. The reason why some people seek wisdom, and do not find it, is because they do not seek it from a right principle, and in a right manner. They are scorers, and it is in scorn that they ask instruction, that they may ridicule what is told them, and may cavil at it. Many put questions to Christ, tempting him, and that they might have whereof to accuse him, and they were never the wiser. They that seek wisdom, as Simon Magus sought the gifts of the holy Ghost, to serve their pride and covetousness, no marvel they do not find it, for they seek amiss. Herod desired to see a miracle, but he was a scorner, and therefore it was denied him, *Luke xxvi. 8.* Scorers speed not in prayer.

2. To those who understand themselves aright, who depart from evil, for that is understanding, the knowledge of God, and of his will, is easy. The parables which harden scorers in their scorning, and make divine things more difficult to them, enlighten those that are willing to learn, and make the same things more plain and intelligible, and familiar to them, *Matt. xiii. 11, 15, 16.* The same word which to the scornful is a savour of death unto death, to the humble and serious is a savour of life unto life. He that understandeth, so as to depart from evil, for that is understanding, to quit his prejudices, to lay aside all corrupt dispositions and affections, will easily apprehend instruction, and receive the impressions of it.

7. Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge.

See here, 1. How we may discern a fool, and discover him; a wicked man, for he is a foolish man; if we perceive not in him the lips of knowledge; if we find there is no relish, or savour of piety in his discourse, that his communication is all corrupt; and corrupting, and nothing in it good, and to the use of edifying, we may conclude the treasure is bad.

2. How we must decline such a one, and depart from him: *Go from his presence*, for thou perceivest there is no good to be gotten by his company, but danger of getting hurt by it. Sometimes the only way we have of reproving wicked discourse, and witnessing against it, is by leaving the company, and going out of the hearing of it.

8. The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit.

See here, 1. The good conduct of a wise and good man, he manageth himself well. It is not the wisdom of the learned, which consists only in speculation, that is here commended, but the wisdom of the prudent, which is practical, and is of use to direct our counsels and actions: Christian prudence consists in a right understanding of our way; for we are travellers, whose concern it is, not to spy wonders, but to get forward towards their journey's end. It is to understand our own way, not to be criticks and busy-bodies in other mens matters, but to look well to our selves, and ponder the path of our feet: To understand the directions of our way, that we may observe them; the dangers of our way, that we may avoid them; the difficulties of our way, that we may break through them; and the advantages of our way, that we may improve them! To understand the rules we are to walk by, and the ends we are to walk towards, and walk accordingly.

2. The ill conduct of a bad man; he puts a cheat upon himself, he doth not rightly understand his way, he thinks he doth, and so misleth his way, and goes on in his mistake: *The folly of fools is deceit*, it cheats them into their own ruin. The folly of him that built on the sand was deceit.

9. Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour.

See here, 1. How wicked people are hardened in their wickedness; they make a mock at sin: They make a laughing matter of the sins of others, making themselves and their companions merry with that for which they should mourn; and they make a light matter of their own sins, both when they are tempted to sin, and when they have committed it; they call evil good, and good evil, *Isa. v. 20.* turn it off with a jest, rush into sin, *Jer. viii. 6.* and say, they shall have peace though they go on: They care not what mischief they do by their sins, and laugh at those that tell them of it. They are advocates for sin, and are ingenious at framing excuses for it. *Fools make a mock at the sin-offering*, so some; they that make light of sin, make light of Christ. They are fools that make light of sin, for they make light of that which God complains of, *Amos ii. 13.* which lay heavy upon Christ, and which they themselves will have other thoughts of shortly.

2. How good people are encouraged in their goodness: *Among the righteous there is favour*; if they in any thing offend, they presently repent, and obtain the favour of God: They have a good-will one to another; and among them in their societies there

is mutual charity and compassion in case of offences, and no mocking.

10. The heart knoweth his own bitterness ; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.

This agrees with 1 Cor. ii. 11. *What man knows the things of a man, and the changes of his temper, save the spirit of a man?*

1. Every man feels most from his own burthen, especially that which is a burthen upon the spirits, for that is commonly concealed, and the sufferer keeps it to himself. We must not censure others griefs, for we know not what they feel, their stroke, perhaps, is heavier than their groaning.

2. Many enjoy a secret pleasure, especially in divine consolations, which others are not aware of, much less sharers in. As the sorrows of a penitent, so the joys of a believer, are such as a *stranger doth not intermeddle with*, and therefore is no competent judge of.

11. The house of the wicked shall be overthrown : but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish.

Note, 1. Sin is the ruin of great families : *The house of the wicked*, though built never so strong and high, *shall be overthrown*, shall be brought to poverty and disgrace, and at length be extinct. His hope for heaven, the house on which he leans, shall not stand, but fail in the storm : the deluge that comes will sweep it away.

2. Righteousness is the rise and stability, even of mean families : *Even the tabernacle of the upright*, though moveable and despicable as a tent, yet *shall flourish* in outward prosperity, if infinite wisdom see good, however, in graces and comforts, which are true riches and honours.

12. There is a way which seemeth right unto a man ; but the end thereof are the ways of death.

We have here an account of the way and end of a great many self-deluded souls.

1. Their way is seemingly fair, it *seemeth right* to themselves ; they please themselves with a fancy that they are as they should be, their opinions and practices are good, and such as will bear them out. The way of ignorance and carelessness, the way of worldliness and earthly-mindedness, the way of sensuality and flesh-pleasing, seem right to those that walk in them ; much more the way of hypocrisy in religion, external performances, partial reformati- ons, and blind zeal, these they imagine will bring them to heaven ; they flatter themselves in their own eyes, that all will be well at last.

2. Their end is really fearful, and the more so for their mistake ; it is *the ways of death*, eternal death ; their iniquity will certainly be their ruin, and they will perish with a lie in their right hand. Self-deceivers will prove in the end self-destroyers.

13. Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful ; and the end of that mirth is heaviness.

This shews the vanity of carnal mirth, and proves what Solomon saith of *laughter*, that it is *mad* ; for,

1. There is sadness under it. Sometimes when sinners are under convictions, or some great trouble, they dissemble their grief by a forced mirth, and put a good face on it because they will not seem to yield ; they cry not when he binds them : Nay, when men really are merry, yet at the same time there is some alloy or other to it ; something that casts a damp upon their mirth, which all their gaiety cannot keep from their heart : Their consciences tell them they have no reason to be merry, *Hof. ix. 1*. They cannot but see the vanity of it. Spiritual joy is seated in the soul ; the joy of the hypocrite is but from the teeth outward. See *John xvi. 22.* 2 *Cor. vi. 10.*

2. There is worse after it : *The end of that mirth is heaviness*. It is soon over, like the crackling of thorns under a pot ; and if the conscience be awake, all sinful and profane mirth will be reflected upon with bitterness ; if not, the heaviness will be so much the greater, when *for all these things God shall bring the sinner into judgment*. The sorrows of the saints will end in everlasting joys, *Psal. cxxvi. 5*. But the laughter of fools will end in endless weeping and wailing.

14. The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways : and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.

Note, 1. The misery of sinners will be an eternal surfeit upon their sins. The *backslider in heart*, that for fear of suffering, or in hope of profit or pleasure forsakes God and his duty, he shall be *filled with his own ways*, God will give him enough of them ; they would not leave their brutish lusts and passions, and therefore they shall stick by them to their everlasting terror and torment ; *he that is filthy shall be filthy still*. *Son remember*, shall fill them with their own ways, and set their sins in order before them. Backsliding begins in the heart, it is the evil heart of unbelief that

departs from God ; and of all sinners backsliders will have most terror when they reflect on *their own ways*, Luke xi. 26.

2. The happiness of the saints will be an eternal satisfaction in their graces, as tokens of, and qualifications for God's peculiar favour. A *good man* shall be abundantly satisfied from himself, *i. e.* from what God has wrought in him. He has *rejoicing in himself alone*, Gal. vi. 4. As sinners never think they have sin enough till it bring them to hell, so saints never think they have grace enough till it brings them to heaven.

15. The simple believeth every word : but the prudent man looketh well to his going.

Note, 1. It is folly to be credulous, to heed every flying report, to give ear to every man's story, though never so improbable, to take things upon trust from common fame ; to depend upon every man's profession of friendship, and give credit to every one that will promise payment ; those are *simple* who thus *believe every word*, forgetting that all men in some sense are liars in comparison with God, all whose words we are to believe with an implicit faith, for he cannot lie.

2. It is wisdom to be cautious ; the *prudent man* will try before he trusts, will weigh both the credibility of the witness, and the probability of the testimony, and then give judgment as the thing appears, or suspend his judgment till it appears. *Prove all things, and believe not every spirit*.

16. A wife man feareth, and departeth from evil ; but the fool rageth and is confident.

Note, 1. Holy fear is an excellent guard upon every holy thing, and against every thing that is unholy. It is wisdom to depart from *evil*, from the evil of sin, and thereby from all other evil ; and therefore it is wisdom to fear, *i. e.* to be jealous over our selves, with a godly jealousy, to keep up a dread of God's wrath, to be afraid of coming near the borders of sin, or dallying with the beginnings of it. A wise man for fear of harm keeps out of harm's way, and starts back in a fright when he finds himself entering into temptation.

2. Presumption is folly. He that when he is warned of his danger *rageth and is confident*, furiously pusheth on, cannot bear to be checked, bids defiance to the wrath and curse of God, and fearless of danger, persists in his rebellion, makes bold with the occasions of sin, and plays upon the precipice, he is a fool, for he acts against his reason and his interest, and his ruin will quickly be the proof of his folly.

17. He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly : and a man of wicked devices is hated.

Note, 1. Passionate men are justly laughed at, men that are peevish, and touchy, and are *soon angry* upon every the least provocation, they *deal foolishly*, they say and do that which is ridiculous, and so expose themselves to contempt ; they themselves cannot be ashamed of it when the heat is over. The consideration of which should engage those, especially that are in reputation for wisdom and honour, with the utmost care to bridle their passion.

2. Malicious men are justly dreaded and detested, for they are much more dangerous and mischievous to all societies. A *man of wicked devices*, that stifles his resentments till he has an opportunity of being revenged, and is secretly plotting how to wrong his neighbour, and to do him an ill turn, as Cain to kill Abel, such a man as this is hated by all mankind. The character of an angry man is piteous, through the surprize of a temptation he disturbs and disgraceth himself, but it is soon over, and he is sorry for it ; but that of a spiteful revengeful man is odious, there is no fence against him, nor cure for him.

18. The simple inherit folly : but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.

Note, 1. Sin is the shame of sinners ; the simple that love simplicity get nothing by it, they *inherit folly*, *i. e.* they have it by inheritance, so some : This corruption of nature is derived from our first parents, and all the calamities that attend it, we have it by kind ; it was the inheritance they transmitted to their degenerate race, an hereditary disease. They are as fond of it as a man of his inheritance, hold it as fast, and are as loth to part with it. What they value themselves by is really foolish, and what will be the issue of their simplicity but folly ? They will for ever rue their own foolish choices.

2. Wisdom is the honour of the wise. The prudent *crown themselves with knowledge*, they look upon it as their brightest ornament, and there is nothing they are so ambitious of ; they bind it to their heads as a crown, which they will by no means part with ; they press towards the top and perfection of knowledge, which will crown their beginnings and progress. They shall have the praise of it ; wise heads shall be respected as if they were crowned heads. They *crown knowledge*, so some read it, they are a credit to their profession ; wisdom is not only justified, but glorified of all her children.

19. The evil bow before the good: and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.

That is, 1. The wicked are oftentimes impoverished and brought low, so that they are forced to beg, their wickedness having reduced them to straits, while good men by the blessing of God are enriched, and enabled to give, and do give even to the evil, for where God grants life, we must not deny a livelihood.

2. Sometimes God extorts, even from bad men, an acknowledgment of the excellency of God's people. The evil ought always to bow before the good, and sometimes they are made to do it, and to know that God has loved them, Rev. iii. 9. They desire their favour, *Eph.* vii. 7. their prayers, *2 Kings* iii. 12.

3. There is a day coming when the upright shall have the dominion, *Psal.* xlix. 14. When the foolish virgins shall come a begging to the wife for oil, and shall knock in vain at that gate of the Lord at which the righteous entered.

20. The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends.

This shews not what should be, but what is the common way of the world, to be shy of the poor, and fond of the rich.

1. Few will give countenance to those whom the world frowns upon, though otherwise worthy of respect. The poor that should be pitied, and encouraged, and relieved, is hated, looked strange upon, and kept at a distance, even by his own neighbour, that before he fell into disgrace, was intimate with him, and pretended to have a kindness for him. Most are swallow-friends that are gone in winter. It is good having God our friend, for he will not desert us when we are poor.

2. Every one will make court to those whom the world smiles upon, though otherwise unworthy. The rich have many friends, friends to their riches, in hope to get something out of them. There is little friendship in the world but what is governed by self-interest, which is no true friendship at all, nor what a wise man will either value himself by, or put any confidence in. Those that make the world their God, idolize them that have most of its good things, and seek their favour as if indeed they were heaven's favourites.

21. He that despiseth his neighbour, sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.

See here how mens character and condition are measured, and judged of by their carriage towards their poor neighbours.

1. Those that look upon them with contempt, are here under a bad character, and their condition will be accordingly. He that despiseth his neighbour because he is low in the world, because he is of mean extraction, rustick education, and makes but a mean figure, that thinks it below him to take notice of him, converse with him, or concern himself about him, and sets him with the dogs of his flock, he is a sinner, is guilty of a sin, is in the way to worse, shall be dealt with as a sinner, unhappy is he.

2. Those that look upon them with compassion are here said to be in a good condition, according to their character. He that has mercy on the poor, is ready to do all the good offices he can to him, and thereby puts an honour upon him, happy is he, he doth that which is pleasing to God, which he himself will afterwards reflect upon with great satisfaction, for which the loins of the poor will bless him, and which will be abundantly recompensed in the resurrection of the just.

22. Do they not err that devise evil? but mercy and truth shall be to them that devise good.

See here, 1. How miserably mistaken they are, that not only do evil, but devise it. Do they not err? Yes, certainly they do, every one knows it. They think by sinning with craft and contrivance, and carrying on their intrigues with more plot and artifice than others, they shall make a better hand of their sins than others do, and come off better, but they are mistaken. God's justice cannot be out-witted. They that devise evil against their neighbours, greatly err, for it will certainly turn upon themselves, and end in their own ruin; a fatal error!

2. How wisely they consult their own interest, that not only do good, but devise it. Mercy and truth shall be to them, not a reward of debt, they will own that they merit nothing but a reward of mercy, meer mercy, mercy according to the promise, mercy and truth, to which God is pleased to make himself a debtor. These that are so liberal as to devise liberal things, that seek opportunities of doing good, and contrive how to make their charity most extensive, and most acceptable to those that need it, by liberal things they shall stand, *Isa.* xxxii. 8.

23. In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.

Note, 1. Working without talking will make men rich. In all labour of the head, or of the hand there is profit, it will turn

to some good account or other. Industrious people are generally thriving people, and where there is something done there is something to be had. The stirring hand gets a penny. It is good therefore to keep in business, and keep in action, and what our hand finds to do, do it with all our might.

2. Talking without working will make men poor. Those that love to brag of their business, and make a noise about it, and that waste their time in tittle-tattle, in telling and hearing new things, like the Athenians, and under pretence of improving themselves by conversation, neglect the work of their place and day, they waste what they have, and the course they take tends to penury, and will end in it. It is true in the affairs of our souls; those that take pains in the service of God, that strive earnestly in prayer will find profit in it. But if mens religion runs all out in talk and noise, and their praying is only the labour of the lips, they will be spiritually poor, and come to nothing.

24. The crown of the wise is their riches: but the foolishness of fools is folly.

Observe, 1. If men be wise and good, riches make them so much the more honourable and useful. The crown of the wise is their riches, i. e. their riches make them to be so much the more respected, and give them the more authority, and influence upon others. They that have wealth and wisdom to use it, will have a great opportunity of honouring God, and doing good in the world. Wisdom is good without an inheritance, but better with it.

2. If men be wicked and corrupt, their wealth will but the more expose them. The foolishness of fools, put them in what condition you will, is folly, and will shew it self, and shame them; if they have riches they do mischief with them, and are the more hardened in their foolish practices.

25. A true witness delivereth souls, but a deceitful witness speaketh lies.

See here, 1. How much praise is due to a faithful witness: He delivereth the souls of the innocent that are falsely accused, and their good names, which are as dear to them as their lives. A man of integrity will venture the displeasure of the greatest to bring truth to light, and rescue those that are injured by falsehood. A faithful minister that truly witnesseth for God against sin, is thereby instrumental to deliver souls from eternal death.

2. How little regard is to be had to a false witness, he forges lies, and yet pours them out with the greatest assurance imaginable for the destruction of the innocent. It is therefore the interest of a nation by all means possible to detect and punish false witness-bearing, yea, and lying in common conversation; for truth is the cement of society.

26. In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge. 27. The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

In these two verses we are invited and encouraged to live in the fear of God by the advantages which attend a religious life; the fear of the Lord is here put for all gracious principles, producing gracious practices.

1. Where this reigns it produceth a holy security, and serenity of mind; there is in it a strong confidence, it enables a man still to hold fast both his purity and his peace whatever happens, and gives him boldness before God and the world. I know that I shall be justified: None of these things move me; such is the language of this confidence.

2. It entails a blessing upon prosperity. They that by faith make God their confidence, their children after them shall be encouraged by the promise that God will be a God to believers, and to their seed, to fly to him as their refuge, and they shall find shelter in him. The children of religious parents often do the better for their parents instructions and example, and fare the better for their faith and prayers. Our fathers trusted in thee, therefore we will.

3. It is an over-flowing, ever-flowing spring of comfort and joy; it is a fountain of life, yielding constant pleasure and satisfaction to the soul, joys that are pure and fresh, are life to the soul, and quench its thirst, and can never be drawn dry; it is a well of living water, that is springing up to, and is the earnest of eternal life.

4. It is a sovereign antidote against sin and temptation. Those that have a true relish of the pleasures of serious godliness, will not be allured by the baits of sin to swallow its hook, they know better things than any it can pretend to offer, and therefore it is easy to them to depart from the snares of death, and to keep their foot from being taken in them.

28. In the multitude of people is the kings honour: but in the want of people is the destruction of the prince.

Here

Here is a maxim in politicks which carries its own evidence with it.

1. That it is much for the honour of a king to have a populous kingdom; it is a sign he rules well, since strangers are hereby invited to come and settle under his protection, and his own subjects live comfortably; it is a sign he and his kingdom are under the blessing of God, the effect of which is being fruitful and multiplying. It is his strength, and makes him considerable and formidable; happy is the king, the father of his country, who has his *quiver full of arrows, he shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with his enemy in the gate*, Psal. cxxvii. 4, 5. It is therefore the wisdom of princes, by a mild and gentle government, by encouraging trade and husbandry, and by making all easy under them to promote the increase of their people. And let all that wish well to the kingdom of Christ, and to his honour, do what they can in their places that many may be added to his church.

2. That when the people are lessened, the prince is weakned, *in the want of people is the leanness of the prince*, so some read it; trade lies dead, the ground lies untilld, the army wants to be recruited, the navy to be manned, and all because there are not hands sufficient. See how much the honour and safety of kings depend upon their people, which is a reason why they should rule by love, and not with rigour. Princes are corrected by those judgments which abate the number of the people, as we find, 2 Sam. xxiv. 13.

29. *He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.*

Note, 1. Meekness is wisdom. He rightly understands himself, and his duty and interest, the infirmities of the human nature, and the constitution of human society that is slow to anger, and knows how to excuse others faults as well as his own, how to adjourn his resentments, and moderate them, so as by no provocation to be put out of the possession of his own soul. A mild, patient man is really to be accounted an intelligent man, one that learns of Christ, who is wisdom it self.

2. Unbridled passion is folly proclaimed. *He that is hasty of spirit*, whose heart is tinder to every spark of provocation, that is all fire and tow, as we say, he thinks hereby to magnify himself, and make those about stand in awe of him, whereas really he *exalts his own folly*, he makes it known, as that which is lifted up is visible to all; and he submits himself to it, as to the government of one that is exalted.

30. *A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones.*

The foregoing verse shewed how much our reputation, this, how much our health depends on the good government of our passions, and the preserving of the temper of the mind.

1. A *healing spirit* that is made up of love and meekness, a hearty, friendly, cheerful disposition *is the life of the flesh*, it contributes to a good constitution of body, people grow fat with good humour.

2. A fretful, envious, discontented spirit is its own punishment, it consumes the flesh, preys upon the animal spirits, makes the countenance pale, and is the *rottenness of the bones*; they that see the prosperity of others and are grieved, let them *gnash with their teeth, and melt away*, Psal. cxii. 10.

Rumpatur, quisquis rumpitur invidia.

31. *He that oppresseth the poor, reproacheth his maker: but he that honoureth him, hath mercy on the poor.*

God is here pleased to interest himself more than one would imagine in the usage given to the poor.

1. He reckons himself affronted in the injuries that are done them. Whosoever he be that wrongs a poor man, taking advantage against him, because he is poor and cannot help himself, let him know that he puts an affront upon his Maker. God made him, and gave him his being, the same that is the author of our being, we have all one father, one maker; see how Job considered this, Job xxxi. 15. God made him poor, and appointed him his lot, so that if we deal hardly with any because they are poor, we reflect upon God as dealing hardly with them, in laying them low that they might be trampled upon.

2. He reckons himself honoured in the kindnesses that are done them, he takes them as done to himself, and will shew himself accordingly pleased with them; *I was hungry, and ye gave me meat*. Those therefore that have any true honour for God, will shew it by compassion to the poor, whom he has undertaken in a special manner to protect and patronize.

32. *The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.*

Here is, 1. The desperate condition of a wicked man when he goes out of the world. He is *driven away in his wickedness*, he

cleaves so close to the world, that he cannot find in his heart to leave it, but is *driven away* out of it; his soul is required, is forced from him, and sin cleaves so close to him that it is inseparable, it goes with him into another world; he is *driven away in his wickedness*, dies in his sins, under the guilt and power of them, unjustified, un sanctified; his wickedness is the storm in which he is hurried away, as chaff before the wind, chased out of the world.

2. The comfortable condition of a godly man when he finisheth his course; he *hath hope in his death*, of a happiness on the other side death, of better things in another world than ever he had in this. They then have the grace of hope in them, though they have pain, and some dread of death, yet they have hope; they have before them the good hoped for, even the blessed hope, which God that cannot lie has promised.

33. *Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding: but that which is in the midst of fools is made known.*

Observe, 1. Modesty is the badge of wisdom. He that is truly wise hides his treasure, so as not to boast of it, Matt. xiii. 43. though he doth not hide his talent, so as not to trade with it. His *wisdom rests in his heart*, he digests what he knows, and has it ready to him, but doth not unseasonably talk of it, and make a noise with it. The heart is the seat of the affections, and there wisdom must rest in the practical love of it, and not swim in the head.

2. Openness and ostentation is a mark of folly. If fools have a little smattering of knowledge, they take all occasions, though very foreign, to produce it, and bring it in by head and shoulders. Or, the folly that *is in the midst of fools is made known* by their forwardness to talk. Many a foolish man takes more pains to shew his folly, than a wise man thinks it worth his while to take to shew his wisdom.

34. *Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.*

Note, 1. Justice reigning in a nation puts an honour upon it. A righteous administration of the government, impartial equity between man and man, publick countenance given to religion, the general practice and profession of virtue, the protecting and preserving of virtuous men, charity and compassion to strangers; (alms are sometimes called righteousness) these *exalt a nation*, they uphold the throne, elevate the peoples minds, and qualify a nation for the favour of God, which will make them high, as a *holy nation*, Deut. xxvi. 19.

2. Vice reigning in a nation puts disgrace upon it. *Sin is a reproach to any city or kingdom*, and renders them despicable among their neighbours. The people of Israel were often instances of both parts of this observation; they were great when they were good, but when they forsook God all about them insulted them, and trampled on them. It is therefore the interest and duty of princes to use their power for the suppression of vice, and support of virtue.

35. *The kings favour is toward a wise servant: but his wrath is against him that causeth shame.*

This shews, that in a well ordered court and government, smiles and favours are dispensed among those that are employed in publick trusts, according to their merits: Solomon lets them know he will go by that rule.

1. That those who behave themselves wisely shall be respected and preferred, whatever enemies they may have that seek to undermine them. No man's services shall be neglected, to please a party or a favourite.

2. That those who are selfish and false, that betray their country, oppress the poor, and sow discord, and thus *cause shame*, they shall be displaced, and banished the court, whatever friends they may make to speak for them.

C H A P. XV.

1. *A Soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.*

Solomon, as conservator of the publick peace, here tells us, 1. How the peace may be kept, that we may know how in our places to keep it; it is by soft words: If wrath be risen like a threatening cloud, pregnant with storms and thunder, a *soft answer* will disperse it, and turn it away. When men are provoked, speak them fair, and give them good words, and they will be pacified; as the Ephraimites were by Gideon's mildness, Judg. viii. 1, 2, 3. whereas, upon a like occasion, by Jephthah's roughness, they were exasperated, and the consequences were ill, Judg. xii. 1, 2, 3. Reason will be better spoken, and a righteous cause better pleaded, with meekness than with passion; hard arguments do best with soft words.

2. How

2. How the peace will be broken, that we for our parts may do nothing towards the breaking of it. Nothing stirs up anger, and sows discord like *grievous words*, calling foul names, as *racā*, and *thou fool*, upbraiding men with their infirmities and infelicities, their extraction or education, or any thing that lessens them; and makes them mean; scornful, spiteful reflections, by which men affect to shew their wit and malice, stir up the anger of others, which doth but encrease and enflame their own anger. Rather than lose a jest some will lose a friend, and make an enemy.

2. The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.

Note, 1. A good heart, by the tongue, becomes very useful. He that has knowledge, is not only to enjoy it for his own entertainment, but to use it, to use it aright, for the edification of others; and it is *the tongue* that must make use of it in pious, profitable discourse, in giving suitable and seasonable instructions, counsels, and comforts, with all possible expressions of humility and love, and then *knowledge is used aright*; and to him that hath, and thus useth what he hath, more shall be given.

2. A wicked heart, by the tongue, becomes very hurtful; for *the mouth of fools belcheth out foolishness*; which is very unfavoury and offensive; and the corrupt communication which proceedeth from an evil treasure within, the filthiness, and foolish talking, and jesting, corrupts the good manners of some, and debaucheth them; and grieves the good hearts of others, and disturbs them.

3. The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

The great truths of divinity are of mighty use to enforce the precepts of morality, and none more than this; That the eye of God is always upon the children of men.

1. An eye to discern all; not only from which nothing can be concealed, but by which every thing is actually inspected, and nothing over-looked, or looked slightly upon. *The eyes of the Lord are in every place*; for he not only sees all from on high, *Psal. xxxiii. 13.* but he is every where present. Angels are *full of eyes*, *Rev. iv. 8.* but God is all eye. It notes not only his omniscience, that he sees all, but his universal providence, that he upholds and governs all. Secret sins, services and sorrows, are under his eye.

2. An eye to distinguish both persons and actions; he beholds *the evil and the good*; is displeased with the evil, and approves of the good, and will judge men according to the sight of his eyes, *Psal. i. 6. xi. 4.* The wicked shall not go unpunished, nor the righteous unrewarded, for God has his eye upon both, and knows their true character; which speaks as much comfort to saints, as terror to sinners.

4. A wholsom tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.

Note, 1. A good tongue is healing; healing to wounded consciences, by comforting them; to sin-sick souls, by convincing them; to peace and love when it is broken, by accommodating differences, compromising matters in variance, and reconciling parties at variance; this is the healing of the tongue, which *is a tree of life*, the leaves of which have a sanative virtue, *Rev. xxii. 2.* He that knows how to discourse, will make the place he lives in a paradise.

2. An ill tongue is wounding; *perverseness*, passion, falshood, and filthiness *there, is a breach in the spirit*; it wounds the conscience of the evil speaker, and occasions either guilt or grief to the hearers, and both are to be reckoned *breaches in the spirit*. Hard words indeed break no bones, but many a heart has been broke by them.

5. A fool despiseth his fathers instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.

Hence, 1. Let superiors be admonished to give instruction and reproof to those that are under their charge, as they will answer it in the day of account. They must not only instruct with the light of knowledge, but reprove with the heat of zeal; and both these must be done with the authority and affection of a father, and must be continued, though the desired effect be not presently perceived. If the instruction be despised, give reproof, and rebuke sharply. It is indeed against the grain with good-humoured men to find fault, and make those about them uneasy; but better so, than to suffer them to go on undisturbed in the way to ruin.

2. Let inferiors be admonished, not only to submit to instruction and reproof, even hardships must be submitted to, but to value them as favours, and not despise them; to make use of them for their conduct, and always to have a regard to them; this will be an evidence that they are wise, and a means of making them so; whereas he that slight his good education is a fool, and is like to live and die one.

6. In the house of the righteous is much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble.

Note, 1. Where righteousness is, riches are, and the comforts of them: *In the house of the righteous is much treasure.* Religion teacheth men to be diligent, and temperate, and just; and by these means ordinarily the estate is increased; but that is not all, God *blesteth the habitation of the just*, and that blessing makes rich without trouble. Or, if there be not much of this world's goods, yet where there is grace there is true treasure; and those who have but little, if they have a heart to be therewith content; and to enjoy the comfort of that little, it is enough; it is all riches. The righteous, perhaps, are not themselves enriched, but there is treasure in their house, a blessing in store; which their children after them may reap the benefit of. A wicked, worldly man is only for having his belly filled with those treasures, his own sensual appetite gratified, *Psal. xvii. 14.* but a righteous man's first care is for his soul, and then for his seed; to have treasure in his heart, and then in his house; which his relations, and those about him, may have the benefit of.

2. Where wickedness is, though there may be riches, yet there is vexation of spirit with them: *In the revenues of the wicked, the great incomes they have, there is trouble*; for there is guilt and a curse; there is pride, and passion, and envy, and contention; and those are troublesome lusts, which rob them of the joy of their revenues, and make them troublesome to their neighbours.

7. The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish doth not so.

This is to the same purpose with *ver. 2.* and shews what a blessing a wise man is, and what a burthen a fool is to those about him: Only here observe further,

1. That we then *use knowledge aright*, when we disperse it; not confine it to a few of our intimates, and grudge it to others who would make as good use of it; but *give a portion* of this spiritual alms to *seven, and also to eight*; not only be communicative, but diffusive of this good, with humility and prudence. We must take pains to spread and propagate useful knowledge; must teach some, that they may teach others; and so it is dispersed.

2. That it is not only a fault to *pour out foolishness*, but it is a shame not to *disperse knowledge*; at least, to drop some wise word or other: *The heart of the foolish doth not so*; it has nothing to disperse that is good; or if it had, has neither skill or will to do good with it, and therefore is little worth.

8. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

Note, 1. God doth so hate wicked people, whose hearts are malicious, and their lives mischievous, that even their *sacrifices are an abomination* to him. God hath sacrifices brought him, even by wicked men, to stop the mouth of conscience, and to keep up their reputation in the world; as malefactors come to a sanctuary, not because it is a holy place, but because it shelters them from justice: but their sacrifices, though never so costly, are not accepted of God, because not offered in sincerity, nor from a good principle; they dissemble with God, and in their conversations give the lie to their devotions, and for that reason they are *an abomination* to him, because they are made a cloak for sin, *Prov. vii. 14.* See *Isa. i. 11.*

2. God has such a love for upright good people, that, though they are not at the expence of a sacrifice, (he himself hath provided that) their *prayer is a delight* to him: Praying graces are his own gift, and the work of his own Spirit in them, with which he is well pleased: He not only answers their prayers, but delights in their addresses to him, and in doing them good.

9. The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.

This is a reason of what was said in the foregoing verse. 1. *The sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to God*; not for want of some nice points of ceremony, but because *their way*, the whole course and tenor of their conversations is wicked, and consequently an abomination to him: And sacrifices for sin were not accepted of those that resolved to go on in sin, and were to the highest degree abominable, if intended to obtain a connivance at sin, and a permission to go on in it.

2. Therefore *the prayer of the upright is his delight*, because he is a friend of God, and *he loves him that*, though he have not yet attained, is *following after righteousness*, aiming at it, and pressing towards it, as St. Paul, *Phil. iii. 13.*

10. Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproof shall die.

This shews that those who cannot bear to be corrected, must expect to be destroyed.

1. It is common for those that have known the way of righteousness, but have forsaken it, to reckon it a great affront to be reprov'd and admonish'd; they are very uneasy at it, they cannot, they will not bear it; nay, because they hate to be reformed, they hate to be reprov'd, and hate those that deal faithfully and kindly with them. Of all sinners reproofs are worst resented by apostates.

2. It is certain that those who will not be reprov'd will be ruin'd: *He that hateth reproof*, and hardens his heart against it, he is joined to his idols, let him alone, he *shall die*, and perish for ever in his sins, since he would not be parted from his sins, 2 Chron. xxv. 16. *I know that God has determined to destroy thee*, because thou couldst not bear to be reprov'd, Prov. xxix. 1.

11. Hell and destruction are before the LORD: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?

This confirms what was said, ver. 3. concerning God's omniscience, in order to his judging of evil and good.

1. God knows all things, even those things that are hid from the eyes of all living. *Hell and destruction are before the Lord*; not only the centre of the earth, and its subterraneous caverns; but the grave, and all the dead bodies which are there buried out of our sight; they are all *before the Lord*, all under his eye, so that none of them can be lost, or be to seek, when they are to be rais'd again: He knows where every man lies buried, even Moses, even those that are buried in the greatest obscurity; nor needs he any monument with a *Hic jacet* to direct him. The place of the damned in particular, and all their torments, which are unexpressible; the state of separate souls in general, and all their circumstances, are under God's eye. The word here used for *destruction* is *Abaddon*, which is one of the devil's names, Rev. ix. 11. That destroyer, though he deceive us, cannot evade or elude the divine cognizance. God examines him, whence he comes, Job i. 7. and sees through all his disguises, though he is sly, and subtil, and swift, Job xxvi. 6.

2. He knows particularly *the hearts of the children of men*. If he sees through the depths and wiles of Satan himself, much more can he search mens hearts, though they be deceitful, since all their cheats they learned of him. *God is greater than our hearts*, and knows them better than we know them ourselves, and therefore is an infallible judge of every man's character. Heb. iv. 13.

12. A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him: neither will he go unto the wife.

A scorner is one that not only makes a jest of God and religion, but bids defiance to the methods of his conviction and reformation; and as an evidence of that,

1. He cannot endure the checks of his own conscience, nor will he suffer it to deal plainly with him. *He loveth not to reprove him*; so some read it. He cannot endure to retire into his own heart, and commune seriously with that; will not admit of any free thought or fair reasoning with himself, nor let his own heart smite him, if he can help it. That man's case is sad, who is afraid of being acquainted and arguing with himself.

2. He cannot endure the advice and admonitions of his friends. *He will not go unto the wife*, lest they should give him wise counsel. We ought not only to bid the wise welcome when they come to us, but to go to them, as beggars to the rich man's door for an alms; but this the scorner will not do, for fear of being told of his faults, and prevailed with to reform.

13. A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.

Here, 1. Harmless mirth is recommended to us, as that which contributes to the health of the body, makes men lively and fit for business, and to the acceptableness of the converse, making the face to shine, and rendering us pleasant one to another. A cheerful spirit, under the government of wisdom and grace, is a great ornament to religion, puts a further lustre upon the beauty of holiness, and makes men the more capable of doing good.

2. Hurtful melancholy is what we are cautioned against, as a great enemy to us both in our devotion, and in our conversation: *By sorrow of the heart*, when it has got dominion, and plays the tyrant, as it will be apt to do, if it be indulged a while, *the spirit is broken* and sunk, and becomes unfit for the service of God. *The sorrow of the world worketh death*. Let us therefore weep as though we wept not, in justice to our selves, as well as in conformity to God and his providence.

14. The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness.

Here are two things to be wondred at.

1. A wise man not satisfied with his wisdom, but still seeking

the increase of it; the more he has the more he would have: *The heart of him that has understanding*, rejoiceth so in the knowledge it has attained to, that it is still coveting more; and in the use of the means of knowledge is still labouring for more; *growing in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ*. Si dixisti sufficit, periisti.

2. A fool well satisfied with his folly, and not seeking the cure of it. While a good man hungers after the solid satisfactions of grace, a carnal mind feasts on the gratifications of appetite and fancy. Vain mirth and sensual pleasures are its delight, and with these it can rest contented, flattering itself in these foolish ways.

15. All the days of the afflicted are evil: but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast.

See here what a great difference there is between the condition and temper of some and others of the children of men.

1. Some are much in affliction, and of a sorrowful spirit, and all their days are evil days, like those of old age; and days of which they say they *have no pleasure in them*. They *eat in darkness*, Eccl. v. 17. and never *eat with pleasure*, Job xxi. 25: How many are the afflictions of the afflicted in this world? Such are not to be censured or despised, but pitied and prayed for, succoured and comforted. It might have been our own lot, or may be yet, as merry as we are.

2. Others enjoy great prosperity, and are of a cheerful spirit; and they have not only good days, but have *a continual feast*; and if in the abundance of all things they serve God with gladness of heart, and it is oil to the wheels of their obedience; all this, and heaven too; then we serve a good master. But let not such feast without fear, a sudden change may come; therefore *rejoice with trembling*.

16. Better is little with the fear of the LORD, than great treasure, and trouble therewith. 17. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith.

Solomon had said in the foregoing verse, that he which hath not a large estate, or a great income, but a cheerful spirit, has *a continual feast*; christian contentment, and joy in God, make the life easy and pleasant; now here he tells us, what that is which is necessary to that cheerfulness of spirit, which will furnish a man with *a continual feast*, though he has but little in the world; holiness and love.

1. Holiness. A little if we manage it and enjoy it in *the fear of the Lord*, if we keep a good conscience, and go on in the way of duty, and serve God faithfully with the little we have, it will be more comfortable, and turn to a better account, *than great treasure, and trouble therewith*. Observe here, 1. It is often the lot of those that fear God, to have but a little of this world; *the poor receive the gospel*, and poor they still are, Jam. ii. 5. 2. Those that have *great treasure*, have many times *great trouble therewith*: It is so far from making them easy, that it increases their care and hurry: *The abundance of the rich will not suffer them to sleep*. 3. If great treasure bring trouble with it, it is for want of the fear of God: If those that have great estates would do their duty with them, and then trust God with them, their treasure would not have so much trouble attending it. 4. It is therefore far better, and more desirable, to have but a little of the world, and to have it with a good conscience; to keep up communion with God, and enjoy him in it, and live by faith, than to have the greatest plenty, and live without God in the world.

2. Love. Next to the fear of God, peace with all men is necessary to the comfort of this life. 1. If *brethren dwell together in unity*, if they are friendly, and hearty, and pleasant, both in their daily meals, and in more solemn entertainments, that will make *a dinner of herbs* a feast sufficient; though the fare be coarse, and the estate so small that they can afford no better, yet love will sweeten it, and they may be as merry over it, as if they had all dainties. 2. If there be mutual enmity and strife, though there be a whole ox for dinner, a fat ox, there can be no comfort in it; the leaven of malice, of hating and being hated, is enough to sour it all. Some refer it to him that makes the entertainment; better have a slender dinner and be heartily welcome, than a table richly spread with a grudging evil eye.

*Cum torvo vultu mihi coenula nulla placebit,
Cum placido vultu coenula ulla placet.*

18. A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.

Here is, 1. Passion the great make-bait; thence *come wars and fightings*; anger strikes the fire which sets cities and churches into a flame: *A wrathful man*, with his peevish, passionate reflections, *stirs up strife*, and sets people together by the ears; he gives occasion to others to quarrel, and takes the occasion that others give, though never so trifling. When men carry their resentments too far, one quarrel still produceth another.

2. Meek-

2. Meekness the great peace-maker. *He that is slow to anger*, not only prevents strife, that it be not kindled, but *appeaseth* it; if it be already kindled, brings water to the flame, pieceth those again that were fallen out, and by gentle methods brings them to mutual concessions for peace-sake.

19. The way of the slothful man is an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain.

See here, 1. Whence those difficulties arise which men pretend to meet with in the way of their duty, and to be insuperable; they arise not from any thing in the nature of the duty, but from the slothfulness of those that have really no mind to it. Those that have no heart to their work, pretend that their way is hedged up with thorns, and they cannot do their work at all; as if God were a hard master, reaping where he had not sown; at least, that it is strewn with thorns, that they cannot do their work without a great deal of hardship and danger; and therefore they go about it with as much reluctance, as if they were to go barefoot through a thorny hedge.

2. How these imaginary difficulties may be conquered; an honest desire and endeavour to do our duty, will, by the grace of God, make it easy, and we shall find it strewn with roses: *The way of the righteous is made plain*; it is easy to be gone, and not rough; easy to be hit, and not intricate.

20. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother.

Observe here, 1. To the praise of good children, that they are the joy of their parents, who ought to have joy of them, having taken so much care and pains about them. And it adds much to the satisfaction of those that are good, if they have reason to think that they have been a comfort to their parents in their declining years, when evil days come.

2. To the shame of wicked children, that by their wickedness they put contempt upon their parents, slight their authority, and make an ill requital for their kindness. *A foolish son despiseth his mother*, that had most sorrow with him, and, perhaps, had too much indulged him, which makes his sin in despising her the more sinful, and her sorrow the more sorrowful.

21. Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly.

Note, 1. It is the character of a wicked man, that he takes pleasure in sin; he has an appetite to the bait, and swallows it greedily; and has no dread of the hook, nor feels from it when he hath swallowed it: *Folly is joy to him*, others folly is so, and his own much more; he sins; not only without regret, but with delight; not only repents not of it, but makes his boast of it: This is a certain sign of one that is graceless.

2. It is the character of a wise and good man, that he makes conscience of his duty: A fool lives at large, walks at all adventures, by no rule; acts with no sincerity or steadiness; *but a man of understanding*, the eyes of whose understanding are enlightened by the Spirit (and those that have not a good understanding have no understanding) he *walks uprightly*, lives a sober, orderly, regular life, and studies in every thing to conform himself to the will of God: And this is a constant pleasure and *joy to him*. But what foolishness remains in him, or proceeds from him at any time, is a grief to him, and he is ashamed of it: By these characters we may try our selves.

22. Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.

See here, 1. Of what ill consequence it is to be precipitate and rash, and to act without advice: *Mens purposes are disappointed*, their measures broke, and they come short of their point, gain not their end, because they would not ask counsel about the way: If men will not take time and pains to deliberate with themselves; or are so confident of their own judgment that they scorn to consult with others, they are not likely to bring any thing considerable to pass; things happen which defeat them, that, with a little consultation, might have been foreseen and obviated. It is a good rule both in publick and domestick affairs, to do nothing rashly; and of ones own head: *Plus vident oculi quam oculus*. That often proves best which was least our own doing.

2. How much it will be for our advantage to ask the advice of our friends: *In the multitude of counsellors* (provided they be discreet and honest, and will not give counsel with a spirit of contradiction) *purposes are established*. Solomon's son made no good use of this proverb when he acquiesced not in the counsel of the old men, but, because he would have a *multitude of counsellors*, regarding number more than weight, he advised with the young men.

23. A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it?

Note, 1. Then we speak wisely when we speak seasonably. *The answer of the mouth* will then be our credit and joy when it is pertinent, and to the purpose, and is *spoken in due season*, when it was needed, and would be regarded; and, as we say, hit the joint. Many a good word comes short of doing the good it might have done, for want of being well timed. Nor is any thing more the beauty of discourse than to have a proper answer ready, off-hand, just when there is occasion for it, and it comes in well.

2. If we speak wisely and well, it will redound to our own comfort; and to the advantage of others. *A man has joy by the answer of his mouth*; he may take a pleasure; but may by no means take a pride, in having spoken so acceptably and well, that the hearers admire him, and say, *How good is it!* and how much good doth it do!

25. The way of life is above to the wise; that he may depart from hell beneath.

The way of wisdom and holiness is here recommended to us,

1. As very safe and comfortable. It is *the way of life*, the way that leads to eternal life, in which we shall find that joy and satisfaction, which will be the life of the soul, and at the end of which we shall find the perfection of blessedness; be wise and live. It is the way to escape that misery which we cannot but see our selves exposed to; and in danger of: It is to *depart from hell beneath*, from the snares of hell, the temptations of Satan, and all his wiles; from the pains of hell, that everlasting destruction which our sins have deserved.

2. As very sublime and honourable; *it is above*. A good man sets his *affections on things above*, and deals in those things; his *conversation is in heaven*; his way leads directly thither; there his treasure is, *above*, out of the reach of enemies, above the changes of this lower world. A good man is truly noble and great, his desires and designs are high, and he lives above the common rate of other men: It is above the capacity, and out of the sight of foolish men.

25. The LORD will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow.

Note, 1. Those that are elevated God delights to abase, and commonly doth it in the course of his providence: *The proud*, that magnify themselves, bid defiance to the God above them, and trample on all about them; are such as God doth resist, and *will destroy*; not them only; but *their houses*, which they are proud of, and are confident of the continuance and perpetuity of. Pride is the ruin of multitudes.

2. Those that are dejected God delights to support; and many times doth it remarkably. *He will establish the border of the poor widow*, which proud; injurious men break in upon, and which the poor widow is not her self able to defend, and make good. It is the honour of God to protect the weak, and appear for those that are run down.

26. The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD: but the words of the pure are pleasant words.

The former part of this verse speaks of thoughts, the latter of words, but they come all to one; for thoughts are words to God, and words are judged of by the thoughts, from which they proceed; so that;

1. *The thoughts of the wicked*, that are like themselves wicked, that aim at mischief, and have some ill tendency or other, they *are an abomination to the Lord*, he is displeased at them, and will reckon for them: The thoughts of wicked men, for the most part, are such as God hates, and are an offence to him, who not only knows the heart; and all that passes and re-passes there, but requires the innermost and uppermost place in it.

2. The thoughts and words of the pure, being pure like themselves; clean, and honest, and sincere, they *are pleasant words*, and pleasant thoughts; well pleasing to the holy God, who delights in purity: It may be understood both of their devotions to God, *the words of their mouth, and the meditations of their heart*, in prayer and praise, are *acceptable to God*, Psalm xix. 14. lxix. 31. and of their discourses with men; tending to edification: Both are then pleasant, when they come from a pure, a purified heart.

27. He that is greedy of gain, troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live.

Note, 1. Those that are covetous entail trouble upon their families. *He that is greedy of gain*, and therefore making himself a slave to the world, rises up early, sits up late, and eats the bread of carefulness in pursuit of it; that hurries and puts himself and all about him upon the stretch in business, frets and vexes at every loss and disappointment; and quarrels with every body that stands in the way of his profit, he *troubles his own house*, is a burthen and vexation to his children and servants. He that in his greediness of gain takes bribes, useth unlawful ways of getting money, leaves a curse with

with what he gets to those that come after him, which sooner or later will bring trouble into the house, *Hab. ii. 9, 10.*

2. Those that are generous as well as righteous entail a blessing upon their families. *He that hateth gifts*, that shakes his hands from holding the bribes that are thrust into his hand to pervert justice, and abhors all sinful, indirect ways of getting money; that hates to be paltry and mercenary, and is willing, if there be occasion, to do good gratis, he shall live, he shall have the comfort of it, shall live in prosperity and reputation, his name and family shall live and continue.

28. The heart of the righteous studieth to answer : but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.

Here is, 1. A good man proved to be a wise man by this, that he governs his tongue well; he that doth so, *the same is a perfect man*, James iii. 2. It is part of the character of a righteous man, that, being convinced of the account he must give of his words, and of the good and ill influence of them upon others, he makes conscience of speaking truly, it is his heart that answers, i. e. he speaks as he thinks, and dares not do otherwise, he *speaketh the truth in his heart*, Psalm xv. 2. and of speaking pertinently, and profitably, and therefore he *studies to answer*, that his speech may be with grace, *Neh. ii. 4. v. 7.*

2. A wicked man is proved to be a fool by this, that he never heeds what he saith, but his mouth pours out evil things, to the dishonour of God and religion, and his own reproach, and the hurt of others. Doubtless that is an evil heart which thus overflows with evil.

29. The LORD is far from the wicked : but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.

Note, 1. God sets himself at a distance from those that set him at defiance. *The wicked say to the Almighty, Depart from us*, and he is accordingly far from them; he doth not manifest himself to them, has no communion with them, will not hear them, will not help them, no, not in time of their need: They shall be forever banished from his presence, and he will behold them afar off. *Depart from me ye cursed.*

2. He will draw nigh to those in a way of mercy, who draw nigh to him in a way of duty. *He heareth the prayer of the righteous*, accepts it, is well pleased with it, and will grant an answer of peace to it. It is *the prayer of a righteous man that availeth much*, James v. 16. *He is nigh to them*, a present help, in all that they call upon him for.

30. The sight of the eyes rejoiceth the heart : and a good report maketh the bones fat.

Two things are here pronounced pleasant.

1. It is pleasant to have a good prospect, to see the light of the sun, *Eccl. xi. 7.* and by it to see the wonderful works of God, with which this lower world is beautified and enriched; those that want the mercy know how to value it; how would the light of the eyes rejoice their hearts! the consideration of which should make us thankful for our eye-sight.

2. It is more pleasant to have a good name, a name for good things with God, and good people, this is as precious ointment, *Eccl. vii. 1.* it maketh the bones fat, it gives a secret pleasure, and that which is strengthening: It is also very comfortable to hear (as some understand it) a good report concerning others; a good man has no greater joy than to hear that his friends walk in the truth.

31. The ear that heareth the reproof of life, abideth among the wise.

Note, 1. It is the character of a wise man that he is very willing to be reproofed, and therefore chooseth to converse with those that both by their words and examples will shew him what is amiss in him. *The ear that can take the reproof*, will love the reprover. Faithful, friendly reproofs are here called *the reproofs of life*, not only because they are to be given in a lively manner, and with a prudent zeal, and we must reprove with our lives, as well as by our doctrine, but because where they are well taken they are means of spiritual life, and lead to eternal life; and (as some think) to distinguish them from rebukes and reproaches for well-doing, which are rather reproofs of death, which we must not regard, or be influenced by.

2. Those that are so wise as to bear reproof well, will hereby be made wiser, *Prov. ix. 9.* and come at length to be numbred among the wise men of the age, and will have both ability and authority to reprove and instruct others. They that learn well, and obey well, are likely in time to teach well, and rule well.

32. He that refuseth instruction, despiseth his own soul : but he that heareth reproof, getteth understanding.

See here, 1. The folly of those that will not be taught, that refuse instruction, that will not heed it, but turn their backs upon it,

or will not hear it, but turn their hearts against it. They refuse correction, marg. they will not take it, no, not from God himself, but kick against the pricks. They that do so despise their own souls, they shew that they have a low and mean opinion of them, and are in little care and concern about them, considered as rational and immortal, instruction being designed to cultivate reason, and prepare for the immortal state. The fundamental error of sinners is undervaluing their own souls, therefore they neglect to provide for them, abuse them, expose them, prefer the body before the soul, and wrong the soul to please the body.

2. The wisdom of those that are willing, not only to be taught, but to be reproofed; *he that heareth reproof* and amends the faults he is reproofed for, he getteth understanding, by which his soul is secured from bad ways, and directed in good ways, and thereby he both evidences a value he has for his own soul, and puts true honour upon it.

33. The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom ; and before honour is humility.

See here, how much it is our interest as well as duty,

1. To submit to our God, and keep up a reverence for him. *The fear of the Lord*, as it is *the beginning of wisdom*, so it is the instruction and correction of wisdom; the principles of religion, closely adhered to, will improve our knowledge, rectify our mistakes, and be the best and surest guide of our way. An awe of God upon our spirits will put us upon the wisest counsels, and chastise us when we say or do unwisely.

2. To stoop to our brethren, and keep up a respect for them. Where there is humility, there is a happy preface of honour, and preparative for it. Those that humble themselves shall be exalted here and hereafter.

C H A P. XVI.

THE preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.

As we read this it teacheth us a great truth, that we are not sufficient of our selves to think or speak any thing of our selves that is wise and good, but all our sufficiency is of God, who is with the heart, and with the mouth, and works in us both to will and to do, *Phil. ii. 13. Psal. x. 17.* But most read it otherwise; *the preparation of the heart is in man*, he may contrive this and the other, but *the answer of the tongue*, not only the delivering of what he designed to speak, but the issue and success of what he designed to do is of the Lord. That is, in short,

1. *Man purposeth*; he hath a freedom of thought, and a freedom of will permitted him; let him form his projects and lay his schemes as he thinks best: but, after all,

2. *God disposeth*; he cannot go on with his business without the assistance and blessing of God, who made man's mouth and teaches us what we shall say. Nay, God easily can, and often doth, cross mens purposes, and break their measures. It was a curse that was prepared in Balaam's heart, but the answer of the tongue was a blessing.

2. All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes : but the LORD weigheth the spirits.

Note, 1. We are all apt to be partial in judging of our selves. *All the ways of a man*, all his designs, all his doings are clean in his own eyes, and he sees nothing amiss in them, nothing for which to condemn himself, or which should make his projects prove otherwise than well, and therefore he is confident of success, and that the answer of the tongue shall be according to the expectations of the heart, but there is a great deal of pollution cleaving to our ways which we are not aware of, or do not think so ill of as we ought.

2. The judgment of God concerning us we are sure is according to truth; he weighs the spirits in a just and unerring balance, knows what is in us, and passeth a judgment upon us accordingly, and writes *Tekel* upon that which passed our scale with approbation, *weighed in the balance and found wanting*; and by his judgment we must stand or fall. He not only sees mens ways, but tries their spirits, and we are as our spirits are.

3. Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.

Note, 1. It is a very desirable thing to have our thoughts established, and not tossed and put into a hurry by disquieting cares and fears; to go on in an even steady course of honesty and piety, not disturbed or put out of frame by any event or change; to be satisfied that all shall work for good, and issue well at last, and therefore to be always easy and sedate.

2. The only way to have our thoughts established, is to commit our works to the Lord. The great concerns of our souls must be committed to the grace of God, with a dependence upon, and sub-

mission

mission to the conduct of that grace, 2 Tim. i. 12. all our outward concerns must be committed to the providence of God; and to the sovereign, wise, and gracious disposal of that providence. *Roll thy works upon the Lord*, so the word is, roll the burthen of thy care from thy self upon God: lay the matter before him by prayer, *make known thy works unto the Lord*, so some read it; not only the works of thy hand, but the workings of thy heart; and then leave it with him by faith and dependence upon him, submission and resignation to him; *the will of the Lord be done*. We may then be easy, when we resolve that whatever pleaseth God shall please us.

4. The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

Note, 1. That God is the first cause, he is the former of all things and all persons, the fountain of being, he gave every creature the being it has, and appointed it its place. Even the wicked are his creatures, though they are rebels; he gave them those powers with which they fight against him, which aggravates their wickedness, that they will not let him that made them rule them, and therefore though he made them he will not save them.

2. That God is the last end. All is of him, and from him, and therefore all is to him and for him. He made all according to his will, and for his praise; he designed to serve his own purposes by all his creatures, and he will not fail of his design; all are his servants. The wicked he is not glorified by, but he will be glorified upon. He makes no man wicked, but he made those who he foresaw would be wicked, yet he made them, Gen. vi. 6. because he knew how to get him honour upon them. See Rom. ix. 22. Or, as some understand it, he made the wicked to be employed by him as the instruments of his wrath in the day of evil, when he brings judgments on the world. He makes some use even of wicked men, as of other things, to be his sword, his hand, Psal. xvii. 13, 14. *flagellum Dei*. The king of Babylon is called his servant.

5. Every one that is proud in heart, is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.

Note, 1. The pride of sinners sets God against them. He that being high in estate is proud in heart, whose spirit is elevated with his condition, so that he becomes insolent in his carriage towards God and man, let him know, that though he admires himself, and others care for him, yet he is an abomination to the Lord; the great God despiseth him, the holy God detests him.

2. The power of sinners cannot secure them against God, though they strengthen themselves with both hands, though they may strengthen one another with their confederacies and combinations, joining forces against God, they shall not escape his righteous judgment; *wo unto him that strives with his Maker*, Prov. xi. 21.

6. By mercy and truth iniquity is purged; and by the fear of the LORD, men depart from evil.

See here, 1. How the guilt of sin is taken away from us; by the mercy and truth of God; mercy in promising, truth in performing; the mercy and truth which kiss each other in Jesus Christ the Mediator; by the covenant of grace, in which mercy and truth shine so bright: by our mercy and truth, as the condition of the pardon, and a necessary qualification for it. By these, and not by the legal sacrifices, Mic. vi. 7, 8.

2. How the power of sin is broken in us. By the principles of mercy and truth commanding in us, the corrupt inclinations are purged out; so we may take the former part: however, by the fear of the Lord, and the influence of that fear, men depart from evil; they will not dare to sin against God who keep up in their minds a holy dread and reverence of him.

7. When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

Note, 1. God can turn foes into friends when he pleaseth; he that has all hearts in his hand has access to mens spirits and power over them, working insensibly, but irresistibly upon them, can make a man's enemies to be at peace with him, change their minds, or force them into a feigned submission. He can slay all enmities, and bring those together that were at the greatest distance from each other.

2. He will do it for us when we please him; if we make it our care to be reconciled to God, and to keep ourselves in his love, he will incline those that had been envious towards us, and vexatious to us to entertain a good opinion of us, and to become our friends. God made Esau to be at peace with Jacob, Abimelech with Isaac, and David's enemies to court his favour, and desire a league with Israel. The image of God appearing upon the righteous, and his particular loving kindness to them is enough to re-

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commend them to the respects of all, even of those that had been most prejudiced against them.

8. Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right.

Here, 1. It is supposed, that an honest good man may have but a little of the wealth of this world, all the righteous are not rich; that a man may have but little, and yet may be honest; though poverty is a temptation to dishonesty, Prov. xxx. 9. Yet not an invincible one. And that it is possible, a man may grow rich for a while by fraud and oppression, may have great revenues, and those got and kept without right, may have no good title to them, nor make any good use of them.

2. It is maintained, that a small estate honestly come by, which a man is content with, enjoys comfortably, serves God with cheerfulness, and puts to a right use, is much better, and more valuable than a great estate ill-got, and then ill-kept, or ill-spent. It carries with it more inward satisfaction, a better reputation with all that are wise and good, it will last longer, and will turn to a better account in the great day; when men will be judged, not according to what they had, but what they did.

9. A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.

Man is here represented to us,

1. As a reasonable creature, that has the faculty of contriving for himself; *his heart deviseth his way*, designs an end, and projects ways and means leading to that end, which the inferior creatures who are governed by sense, and natural instinct cannot do. The more shame for him if he do not devise the way how to please God, and provide for his everlasting state.

2. But as a depending creature that is subject to the direction and dominion of his Maker; if men *devise their way*, so as to make God's glory their end, and his will their rule, they may expect that he will direct their steps by his Spirit and grace, so as that they shall not miss their way, nor come short of their end. But let men devise their worldly affairs never so politickly, and with never so great a probability of success, yet God has the ordering of the event, and sometimes directs their steps to that which they least intended. The design of this is to teach us to say, *If the Lord will we shall live and do this or that*, James iv. 14, 15. And to have our eye to God, not only in the great turns of our lives, but in every step we take; *Lord, direct my way*, 1 Thes. iii. 11.

10. A divine sentence is in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment.

We wish this were always true as a proposition; and we ought to make it our prayer for kings and all in authority, that a divine sentence may be in their lips, both in giving orders that they may do that in wisdom, and in giving sentence, that they may do that in equity, both which are included in judgment, and that in neither *their mouth may transgress*, 1 Tim. ii. 1. But it is oft otherwise, and therefore,

1. It may be read as a precept to the kings and judges of the earth, to be wise and instructed, let them be just; and judges of the earth, to be wise and instructed, let them be just, and rule in the fear of God; let them act with such wisdom and conscience as that there may appear a holy divination in all they say or do; and that they are guided by principles supernatural; let not their mouths transgress in judgment, for the judgment is God's.

2. It may be taken as a promise to all good kings, that if they sincerely aim at God's glory, and seek direction from him, he will qualify them with wisdom and grace above others in proportion to the eminency of their station, and the trusts lodged in their hands. When Saul himself was made king, God gave him another spirit.

3. It was true concerning Solomon who wrote this, he had extraordinary wisdom, pursuant to the promise God made him. See 1 Kings iii. 28.

11. A just weight and balance are the LORDS: all the weights of the bag are his work.

Note, 1. The administration of publick justice by the magistrate is an ordinance of God; in it the scales are held, and ought to be held by a steady and impartial hand; and we ought to submit to it for the Lord's sake, and to see his authority in that of the magistrate, Rom. xiii. 1. 1 Pet. ii. 13.

2. The observation of justice in commerce between man and man is likewise a divine appointment. He taught men discretion to make scales and weights for the adjusting of right exactly between buyer and seller, that neither may be wronged; and all other useful inventions for the preserving of right are from him; He has also appointed by his law that they be just, it is therefore a great affront to him, and to his government to falsify, and so to do wrong under colour, and pretence of doing right, which is wickedness in the place of judgment.

12. It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness.

Here is, 1. The character of a good king, which Solomon intended not for his own praise, but for instruction to his successors, his neighbours, and the vice-roys under him. A good king not only doth justice, but it is an abomination to him to do otherwise; he hates the thought of doing wrong, and perverting justice; not only abhors the wickedness done by others, but abhors to do any himself, though having power he might easily and safely do it.

2. The comfort of a good king; his *throne is established by righteousness*. He that makes conscience of using his power aright, shall find that to be the best security of his government; both as it will oblige people, make them easy, and keep them in the interests of it; and it will obtain the blessing of God, which will be a firm basis to the throne, and a strong guard about it.

13. Righteous lips are the delight of kings: and they love him that speaketh right.

Here is a further character of good kings, that they *love and delight* in those that *speak right*, i. e.

1. They hate parasites, and those that flatter them, and are very willing that all about them should deal faithfully with them, and tell them that which is true, whether it be pleasing or displeasing, both concerning persons and things, that every thing should be set in a true light, and nothing disguised, *Prov. xxix. 12.*

2. They not only do righteousness themselves, but take care to employ those under them that do righteousness too; which is of great consequence to the people, who must be subject not only to the king as supreme, but to the governors sent by him, *1 Pet. ii. 14.*

A good king will therefore put those in power who are conscientious, and will say that which is righteous and discreet, and know how to speak right, and to the purpose.

14. The wrath of a king is as messengers of death, but a wise man will pacify it. 15. In the light of the king's countenance is life, and his favour is as a cloud of the latter rain.

These two verses shew the power of kings, which is every where great, but was especially so in those eastern countries, where they were absolute and arbitrary, whom they would they slew, and whom they would they kept alive: their will was a law; we have reason to bless God for the happy constitution of the government we live under, which maintains the prerogative of the prince without any injury to the liberty of the subject. But here it is intimated,

1. How formidable *the wrath of a king is*, it is *as messengers of death*, the wrath of Ahasuerus was so to Haman; an angry word from an incensed prince has been to many a messenger of death, and has struck as great a terror upon some as if a sentence of death had been pronounced upon them. And he must be a very wise man that knows how to pacify it with a word fitly spoken; as Jonathan once pacified his father's rage against David, *1 Sam. xix. 6.*

2. How valuable and desirable the king's favour is, to those that have incurred his displeasure, it is life from the dead, if the king be reconciled to them. To others it is a *cloud of the latter rain*, very refreshing to the ground. Solomon put his subjects in mind of this, that they might not do any thing to incur his wrath, but be careful to recommend themselves to his favour. We ought by it to be put in mind how much we are concerned to escape the wrath, and obtain the favour of the King of kings. His frowns are worse than death, and his favour better than life; and therefore they are fools, who to escape the wrath, and obtain the favour of an earthly prince, will throw themselves out of God's favour, and make themselves obnoxious to his wrath.

16. How much better is it to get wisdom than gold? and to get understanding, rather to be chosen than silver?

Solomon here not only asserts that it is better to get wisdom than gold, (*chap. iii. 14.—viii. 19.*) But he speaks it with assurance that it is much better, beyond expression, with admiration, *how much better!* amazed at the disproportion; with an appeal to men's consciences, judge in your selves how much better it is; and with an addition to the same purpose, that understanding is *rather to be chosen than silver*, and all the treasures of kings and their favourites.

Note, 1. Heavenly wisdom is better than worldly wealth, and to be preferred before it. Grace is more valuable than gold. Grace is the gift of God's peculiar favour. Gold only of common providence. Grace is for our selves, gold for others: Grace for the soul and eternity, gold only for the body and time. Grace will stand us in stead in a dying hour, when gold will do us no good.

2. The getting of this heavenly wisdom is better than the getting of worldly wealth. Many take care and pains to get wealth, and yet come short of it, but grace was never denied to any that sincerely sought it. There is vanity and vexation of spirit in getting wealth, but joy and satisfaction of spirit in getting wisdom, *great peace have they that love it.*

17. The high-way of the upright is to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way, preserveth his soul.

Note, 1. It is *the way of the upright* to avoid sin, and every thing that looks like it and leads towards it; and this is a high-way marked out by authority, tracked by many that have gone before us, and in which we meet with many that keep company with us; it is easy to hit, and safe to be travelled in like a high-way, *Isa. xxxv. 8.* To depart from evil is understanding.

2. It is the care of the upright to preserve their own souls, that they be not polluted with sin, and that by the troubles of the world they may not be put out of the possession of them; especially that they may not perish for ever, *Matt. xvi. 26.* And it is therefore their care to keep their way, and not to turn aside out of it, on either hand, but to press towards perfection. They that adhere to their duty secure their felicity. Keep thy way and God will keep thee.

18. Pride goeth before destruction; and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Note, 1. Pride will have a fall. Those that are of a *haughty spirit*, that think themselves above what is meet, and look with contempt upon others, that with their pride affront God, and disquiet others, they will be brought down, either by repentance or ruin. It is the honour of God to humble the proud, *Job xl. 11, 12.* It is the act of justice, that those who have lifted up themselves should be laid low. Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, were instances of this. Men cannot punish pride, but either admire it or fear it, and therefore God will take the punishing of it into his own hands. Let him alone to deal with proud men.

2. Many times proud men are most proud, and insolent, and haughty just before their destruction, so that it is a certain preface that they are upon the brink of it. When proud men set God's judgments at defiance, and think themselves at the greatest distance from them, that is a sign they are at the door; witness the case of Benhadad and Herod. *While the word was in the king's mouth*, *Dan. iv. 31.* Therefore let us not fear the pride of others, but greatly fear it in our selves.

19. Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.

This is a paradox which the children of this world cannot understand, and will not subscribe to; that it is better to be poor and humble, than to be rich and proud.

1. They that *divide the spoil* are commonly proud, they value themselves, and despise others, and their mind riseth with their condition; those therefore that are *rich in this world*, have need to be charged that they be not high-minded, *1 Tim. vi. 17.* And those that are proud, and will put forth themselves, that thrust, and shove, and scramble for preferment, are the men that commonly *divide the spoil*, and share it among them; they have the world at will, and the ball at their foot.

2. It is upon all accounts better to take our lot with those whose condition is low, and their minds brought to it, than to covet and aim to make a figure and a bustle in the world. Humility, though it should expose us to contempt in the world; yet while it recommends us to the favour of God, qualifies us for his gracious visits, prepares us for his glory, secures us from many temptations, and preserves the quiet and repose of our own souls, is much better than that high-spiritedness, which though it carry away the honour and wealth of the world, makes God a man's enemy, and the devil his master.

20. He that handleth a matter wisely, shall find good: and whoso trusteth in the LORD, happy is he.

Note, 1. Prudence gains men respect and success. *He that handles a matter wisely*, that is master of his trade, and makes it to appear he understands what he undertakes, that is considerate in his affairs, and when he speaks or writes of any subject, doth it pertinently, he shall *find good*, shall come into good repute, and, perhaps, may make a good hand of it.

2. But it is piety only that will secure men's true happiness. They that *handle a matter wisely*, if they are proud, and lean to their own understanding, though they may find some good, yet they will have no great satisfaction in it, but he that *trusteth in the Lord*, and not in his own wisdom, *happy is he*, and shall speed better at last. Some read the former part of the verse, so as to expound it of piety, which is indeed true wisdom; *he that attends to the word*, i. e. the word of God, (*chap. xiii. 13.*) he shall *find good* in it, and good by it. And whoso *trusteth in the Lord*, i. e. in his word which he attends to is happy.

21. The

21. The wise in heart shall be called prudent, and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning.

Note, 1. Those that have solid wisdom will have the credit of it; it will gain them reputation; and they *shall be called prudent*, grave men, and a deference will be paid to their judgment. *Do that which is wise and good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.*

2. Those that with their wisdom have a happy elocution, that deliver themselves easily and with a good grace, are communicative of their wisdom, and have words at will, and good language as well as good sense, they *increase learning*, they diffuse and propagate knowledge to others, and do good with it, and by that means increase their own stock. They add doctrine, improve sciences, and do service to the commonwealth of learning. *To him that has, and useth what he hath, more shall be given.*

22. Understanding is a well-spring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools is folly.

Note, 1. There is always some good to be gotten by a wife and good man, his *understanding is a well-spring of life to him*, which always flows, and can never be drawn dry; he has something to say upon all occasions that is instructive, and of use to those that will make use of it, things new and old, to bring out of his treasure; at least, it is a *spring of life* to himself, yielding him abundant satisfaction; within his own thoughts he entertains and edifies himself, if not others.

2. There is nothing that is good to be gotten by a fool; even his instruction, his set and solemn discourses, are but folly, like himself, and tending to make others like him. When he doth his best, it is but folly, in comparison even with the common talk of a wise man, who speaks better at table, than a fool in Moses's seat.

23. The heart of the wife teacheth his mouth; and addeth learning to his lips.

Solomon had commended eloquence, and *the sweetness of the lips*, ver. 21. and seemed to prefer it before wisdom; but here he corrects himself, as it were, and shews that, unless there be a good treasure within to support the eloquence, it is worth little: Wisdom in *the heart* is the main matter.

1. That is it that directs us in speaking; that *teacheth the mouth* what to speak, and when, and how; so that what is spoken may be proper, and pertinent, and seasonable; which if it be not, though the language be never so fine, it had better be unsaid.

2. That is it that gives weight to what we speak, and *adds learning* to it; strength of reason, and force of argument; without which, let a thing be never so well worded, it will be rejected, when it comes to be considered; as trifling, quaint expressions please the ear, and humour the fancy, but it is learning in the lips that must convince the judgment, and sway that; to which is necessary wisdom in the heart.

24. Pleasant words are as an honey-comb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.

The *pleasant words* here commended must be those which *the heart of the wife teacheth, and adds learning to*, ver. 23. words of seasonable advice, instruction and comfort; words taken from God's word, for that is it which Solomon had learned from his father to account *sweeter than honey; and the honey-comb*, Psalm xix. 10. These words, to those that know how to relish them,

1. Are toothsome; they are like the *honey-comb, sweet to the soul*, which tastes in them that *the Lord is gracious*; nothing more grateful and agreeable to the new man than the word of God, and those words which are borrowed from it, Psalm cxix. 103.

2. They are wholsome; many things are pleasant that are not profitable; but these *pleasant words are health to the bones*, to the inward man, as well as *sweet to the soul*; they make *the bones*, which sin hath broken, and put out of joint, *to rejoice*. The bones are the strength of the body; and the good word of God is a means of spiritual strength, curing the diseases that weaken us.

25. There is a way that seemeth right unto a man: but the end thereof are the ways of death.

This we had before, chap. xiv. 12. but here it is repeated, as that which is very necessary to be thought of;

1. By way of caution to us all to take heed of deceiving our selves in the great concerns of our souls, by resting in that which *seems right*, and is not really so; and for the preventing of a self-delusion, to be impartial in self-examination, and keep up a jealousy over our selves.

2. By way of terror to those whose way is not right, is not as it should be, however it may seem to themselves or others, the end of it will certainly be death; to that it has a direct and certain tendency.

26. He that laboureth, laboureth for himself; for his mouth craveth it of him.

This is designed to engage us to diligence, and quicken us; *what our hand finds to do, to do it with all our might*; both in our worldly business, and in the work of religion; for in the original it is, *The soul that laboureth, laboureth for it self*. It is heart work that is here intended, the labour of the soul, which is here recommended to us.

1. As that which will be absolutely needful; our mouth is continually craving it of us; the necessities both of soul and body are pressing, and require constant relief, so that we must either work or starve. Both call for daily bread, and therefore there must be daily labour; for in the sweat of our face we must eat, 2 *Thess.* iii. 10.

2. As that which will be unspeakably gainful; we know on whose errand we go; *he that laboureth*, shall reap the fruit of his labour, it shall be *for himself*, he shall rejoice in his own work, and *eat the labour of his hands*. If we make religion our business, God will make it our blessedness.

27. An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire. 28. A froward man soweth strife, and a whisperer separateth chief friends.

There are those that are not only vicious themselves, but spiteful and mischievous to others; and they are the worst of men; two sorts of such are here described.

1. Such as envy a man the honour of his good name, and do all they can to blast that by calumnies and misrepresentations. They *dig up evil*, they take a great deal of pains to find out something or other on which to ground a slander; or which may give some colour to it: If none appear above ground, rather than want it, they will dig for it; by diving into what is secret, or looking a great way back; or by evil suspicions and surmises, and forced innuendoes. In the lips of a slanderer and backbiter, *there is as a fire*, not only to brand his neighbour's reputation, to smoke and fuly it, but *as a burning fire* to consume it: And how great a matter doth a little of this fire kindle; and how hardly is it extinguished? *James* iii. 5, 6.

2. Such as envy a man the comfort of his friendship, and do all they can to break that, by suggesting that on both sides, which will set those at variance that are most nearly related, and have been long intimate; or at least cool and alienate their affections one from another. A *froward man*, that cannot find in his heart to love any body but himself, is vexed to see others live in love, and therefore makes it his business to *sow strife*, by giving men base characters one of another, telling lies, and carrying ill-natured stories between *chief friends*; so as to *separate* them one from another, and make them angry at, or at least suspicious of one another. These are ill men, and ill women too, that do such ill offices; they are doing the devil's work, and his will their wages be.

29. A violent man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into the way that is not good. 30. He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things: moving his lips he bringeth evil to pass.

Here is another sort of evil men described to us, that we may neither do like them, nor have any thing to do with them.

1. Such as (like Satan) do all the mischief they can by force and violence, as roaring lions, and not only by fraud and insinuation, as subtil serpents. They are *violent men*, that do all by rapine and oppression, that *shut their eyes*, meditating with the closest intention and application of mind, *to devise froward things*, to contrive how they may do the greatest mischief to their neighbour, to do it effectually, and yet securely to themselves; and then *moving their lips*, giving the word of command to their agents, they *bring the evil to pass*, and accomplish the wicked device, *biting his lips*, so some read it, for vexation: When *the wicked plots against the just*, he *gnaseth upon him with his teeth*.

2. Such as (like Satan still) do all they can to *entice* and draw in others to join with them in doing mischief, *leading them in a way that is not good*, neither honest, nor honourable, nor safe, but offensive to God, and which will be in the end pernicious to the sinner. Thus he aims to ruin some by bringing them into trouble in this world, and others in the other world by bringing them into sin.

31. The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.

Note, 1. It ought to be the great care of old people to be found in the way of righteousness, the way of religion, and serious godliness. Both God and man will look for them in that way, it will be expected that those that are old should be good, that the multitude of their years should teach them the best wisdom; let them therefore be found in that way: Death will come, the Judge is coming, *the Lord is at hand*; that they may be found of him in peace, let them be found in the way of righteousness, 2 *Pet.* iii. 14. found so doing, *Matt.* xxiv. 46. Let old people be old disciples, let them

them persevere to the end *in the way of righteousness*, which they long since set out in, that they may then be found in it.

2. If old people be found *in the way of righteousness*, their age will be their honour. Old age, as such, is honourable, and commands respect; *Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head*, Lev. xix. 32. but if it be found in the way of wickedness, its honour is forfeited, its crown profaned, and laid in the dust, *Isa. lxx. 20*. Old people therefore, if they would preserve their honour, must still hold fast their integrity, and then their gray hairs are indeed a crown to them; they are *worthy of double honour*. Grace is the glory of old age.

32. *He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty: and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.*

This recommends the grace of meekness to us, which will well become us all, particularly *the hoary head*, ver. 31. Observe,

1. The nature of it. It is to be *slow to anger*, not easily put into a passion, nor apt to resent provocation; taking time to consider, before we suffer our passion to break out, that it may not transgress due bounds; so slow in our motions towards anger, as that we may be presently stopped and pacified. It is to have the rule of our own spirits, our appetites and affections, and all our inclinations, but particularly our passions, our anger, keeping that under direction and check, and the strict government of religion and right reason. We must be *lords of our anger*, as God is, *Nab. i. 2. Æolus sis affectuum tuorum*.

2. The honour of it. He that gets and keeps the mastery of his passions, he is *better than the mighty*, better than he that, by a long siege, takes a city, or by a long war subdues a country: Behold, a greater than Alexander or Cæsar is here! The conquest of our selves, and our own unruly passions, requires more true conduct, and a more steady, constant, and regular management, than the obtaining of a victory over the forces of an enemy: A rational conquest is more honourable to a rational creature than a brutal one: It is a victory that doth no body any harm, no lives or treasures are sacrificed to it, but only some base lusts. It is harder, and therefore more glorious, to quash an insurrection at home, than to resist an invasion from abroad; nay, such are the gains of meekness, that by it *we are more than conquerors*.

33. *The lot is cast into the lap: but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.*

Note, 1. The divine providence orders and directs those things which to us are perfectly casual and fortuitous. Nothing comes to pass by chance, nor is any event determined by a blind fortune, but every thing by the will and counsel of God. What man has neither eye nor hand in, God has both.

2. When solemn appeals are made to providence by the casting of lots, for the deciding of that matter of moment which could not otherwise be at all, or not so well decided, God must be eyed in it, by prayer, that it may be disposed aright, *Give a perfect lot*, 1 Sam. xiv. 41. Acts i. 24. and by acquiescing in it when it is disposed; being satisfied that the hand of God is in it, and that hand directed by infinite wisdom. All the disposals of providence concerning our affairs, we must look upon to be the directing of our lot, the determining of what we referred to God, and must be reconciled to them accordingly.

C H A P. XVII.

1. **B**etter is a dry morsel and quietness therewith, than a house full of sacrifices with strife.

These words recommend family love and peace, as conducing very much to the comfort of human life.

1. Those that live in unity and quietness, not only free from jealousies and animosities, but vying in mutual endearments, and study to make themselves easy, and obliging to one another, live very comfortably, though they are low in the world, work hard, and fare hard; though they have but each of them a morsel, and that a dry morsel: There may be peace and quietness where there is not three meals a day, provided there be a joint satisfaction in God's providence, and a mutual satisfaction in each others prudence. Holy love may be found in a cottage.

2. Those that live in contention, that are always jarring and brawling, and reflecting upon one another, though they have plenty of dainties, a house full of sacrifices, live uncomfortably; they cannot expect the blessing of God upon them, and what they have, nor can they have any true relish of their enjoyments, much less any peace in their own consciences. Love will sweeten a dry morsel, but strife will sour and embitter a house full of sacrifices: A little of the leaven of malice will leaven all the enjoyments.

2. A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame: and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren.

Note, 1. True merit doth not go by dignity: All agree, that the son in the family is more worthy than the servant, *John viii. 35.* and yet sometimes it so happens, that the servant is wise, and a blessing and credit to the family, when the son is a fool, and a burthen and shame to the family. Eliezer of Damascus, though Abram could not bear to think that he should be his heir, was a stay to the family, when he married Isaac; whereas Ishmael, a son, was a shame to it, when he mocked Isaac.

2. True dignity will go by merit: If a servant be wise, and manage things well, he shall be further trusted, and not only have rule with, but rule over a son that causeth shame; for God and nature have designed, that the fool shall be servant to the wise in heart. Nay, a prudent servant may, perhaps, come to have such an interest in his master, as to be taken in for a child's share of the estate, and to have part of the inheritance among the brethren.

3. The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD trieth the hearts.

Note, 1. The hearts of the children of men are subject, not only to God's view, but to his judgment: As the fining pot is for silver, both to prove it, and to improve it, so the Lord tries the heart; both searcheth whether they are standard or no, and those that are, refines them, and makes them purer, *Jer. xvii. 10*. God tries the heart by affliction, *Psal. lxxvi. 10, 11.* and often chooseth his people in that furnace, *Isa. xlviii. 10.* and makes them choice.

2. It is God only that tries the hearts; men may try their silver and gold with the fining pot, and the furnace, but they have no such way of trying one anothers hearts; God only doth that, who is both the searcher and the sovereign of the heart.

4. A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips: and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.

Note, 1. Those that design to do ill support themselves by falsehood and lying. A wicked doer gives ear, with a great deal of pleasure, to false lips, that will justify him in the ill he doth. Those that aim to make publick disturbances, catch greedily at libels, and false stories, that defame the government, and the administration.

2. Those that take the liberty to tell lies, take a pleasure in hearing them told: A liar gives heed to a malicious, backbiting tongue, that he may have something to graft his lies upon, and with which to give them some colour of truth, and so to support them. Sinners will strengthen one anothers hands; and those shew they are bad themselves, who court the acquaintance, and need the assistance of those that are bad.

5. Whoso mocketh the poor, reproacheth his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities, shall not be unpunished.

See here, 1. What a great sin they are guilty of who trample upon the poor, who ridicule their wants, and the meanness of their appearance, upbraid them with it, and take advantage from their weakness to be abusive and injurious to them; they reproach their Maker, put a great contempt and affront upon him, who allotted the poor to that condition they are in, owns them, and takes care of them, and can, when he pleaseth, reduce us to that condition. And let those that thus reproach their Maker, know they shall be called to an account for it, *Matt. xxv. 40, 41. Prov. xiv. 31.*

2. What a great danger they are in of falling into trouble themselves, who are pleased to see and hear of the troubles of others. He that is glad at calamities, that he may be built up upon the ruins of others, and regales himself with the judgments of God, when they are abroad, let him know that he shall not go unpunished; the cup shall be put into their hand, *Ezek. xxv. 6, 7.*

6. Childrens children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.

They are so, that is, they should be so; if they carry themselves worthily they are so.

1. It is an honour to parents, when they are old, to leave children, and children's children, growing up, that tread in the steps of their virtues, and are likely to maintain and advance the reputation of their families. It is an honour to a man to live so long as to see his children's children, *Psal. cxxviii. 6. Gen. 1. 23.* to see his house built up in them, and to see them likely to serve their generation according to the will of God; this crowns and compleats their comfort in this world.

2. It is an honour to children to have wise and godly parents, and to have them continued to them, even after they are themselves grown up and settled in the world: Those are unnatural children, who reckon their aged parents a burthen to them, and think they live too long; whereas, if the children be wise and good, it is as much their honour as can be, that thereby they are comforts to their parents, in the unpleasant days of their old age.

7. Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less do lying lips a prince.

Two things are here represented as very absurd,

1. That men of no repute should be dictators. What can be more unbecoming than for fools, who are known to have little sense and discretion, to pretend to that which is above them, and which they were never cut out for. A fool in Solomon's proverbs signifies a wicked man; whom excellent speech doth not become, because his conversation gives the lie to his excellent speech. What have they to do to declare God's statutes who *hate instruction*, Psal. l. 16. Christ would not suffer the unclean spirits to say they knew him to be the Son of God. See *Acts* xvi. 17, 18.

2. That men of great repute should be deceivers. If it be unbecoming a despicable man to presume to speak as a philosopher or politician, and no body heeds him, being prejudiced against his character, much more unbecoming it is for a prince, for a man of honour, to take advantage from his character and the confidence that is put in him, to lie and dissemble, and make no conscience of breaking his word. Lying ill becomes any man, but worst a prince; so corrupt is the modern policy, which insinuates, that princes ought not to make themselves slaves to their words further than is for their interest, and *Qui nescit dissimulare nescit regnare*.

8. A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.

The design of this observation is to shew,

1. That those that have money in their hand think they can do any thing with it. Rich men value a little money as if it were a *precious stone*, and value themselves by it, as if it gave them not only ornament but power, and every one were bound to be at their beck, even justice itself. Whithersoever they turn this sparkling diamond they expect it should dazzle the eyes of all, and make them do just what they would have them do, in hopes of it. The deepest bag will carry the cause; see high and you may have what what you will.

2. That those that have money in their eye, and set their hearts upon it, will do any thing for it. *A bribe is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that takes it*, it has a great influence upon him, and he will be sure to go the way that leads him, hither and thither, though contrary to justice, and not consistent with himself.

9. He that covereth a transgression, seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter, separateth very friends.

Note, 1. The way to preserve peace among relations and neighbours is to make the best of every thing; not to tell others what has been said or done against them, when it is not at all necessary to their safety; nor to take notice of what has been said or done against ourselves, but to excuse both, and put the best constructions upon them. It was an oversight, therefore overlook it; it was done through forgetfulness, therefore forget it; it, perhaps, made nothing of you, do you make nothing of it.

2. The ripping up of faults is the ripping out of love; and nothing tends more to the separating of friends and setting them at variance, than the *repeating of matters* that have been in variance; for they commonly lose nothing in the repetition; but the things themselves are aggravated, and the passions about them revived and exasperated. The best method of peace is by an amnesty or act of oblivion.

10. A reproof entrencheth more into a wise man, than an hundred stripes into a fool.

Note, 1. A word is enough to the wise. A gentle reproof will enter not only into the head, but into the heart of a wise man; so as to have a mighty influence upon him, for if but a hint be given to conscience, let it alone to carry it on and prosecute it.

2. Stripes are not enough for a fool, to make him sensible of his errors; that he may repent of them; and be more cautious for the future. He that is foolish and wilful it is very rare that severity doth him any good. David is softened with, *Thou art the man*, but Pharaoh remains hard under all the plagues of Egypt.

11. An evil man seeketh only rebellion: therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.

Here is the sin and punishment of an ill man;

1. His sin: he is an ill man indeed that seeks all occasions to rebel against God, and the government God hath set over him, and to contradict and quarrel with those about him: *Querit jurgia*; so some. There are some that are acted by a spirit of opposition, that will contradict for contradiction sake; that will go on forwardly in their wicked ways, in spite of all restraint and check: *A rebellious man seeketh mischief*, so some read it; watcheth all opportunities to disturb the publick peace;

2. His punishment: therefore, because he will not be reclaimed by mild and gentle methods, *a cruel messenger shall be sent against him*; some dreadful judgment or other, as a messenger from God; Angels, God's messengers, shall be employed as ministers of his justice against him, *Psal.* lxxviii. 49. Satan, the angel of death, shall be let loose upon him; and the *messengers* of Satan. His prince shall send a serjeant to arrest him, an executioner to cut him off. He that *kicks against the pricks* is waited for of the sword.

12. Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man; rather than a fool in his folly.

Note, 1. A passionate man is a brutish man. However at other times he may have some wisdom, take him in his passion unguided, and he is a *fool in his folly*. They are fools in whose bosom anger rests, and in whose countenance anger rageth: He has put off man and is become like a bear, a ranging bear, *a bear robbed of her whelps*; he is as fond of the gratifications of his lusts and passions as a bear of her whelps; (which, though ugly, are her own) as eager in the pursuit of them, as she is in quest of her whelps when they are missing; and as full of indignation if crossed in the pursuit.

2. He is a dangerous man; falls foul on every one that stands in his way, though innocent, though his friend, as a bear robbed of her whelps sets upon the first man she meets as a robber, *Ira furor brevis est*. One may easier stop, escape or guard against an enraged bear, than an outrageous man. Let us therefore watch over our own passions, lest they get head and do mischief, and so consult our own honour: and let us avoid the company of furious men, and get out of their way when they are in their fury, and so consult our own safety. *Currenti cede furori*.

13. Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house.

A malicious, mischievous man is here represented,

1. As ungrateful to his friends; he oftentimes is so absurd and insensible of kindnesses done him, that he renders *evil for good*. David met with those that were his adversaries for his love, *Psal.* cix. 4. To render *evil for evil* is brutish, but to render *evil for good* is devilish. He is an ill natured man; that, because he is resolved not to return a kindness, will revenge it.

2. As therein unkind to his family, for he entails a curse upon it; this is a crime so heinous, that it shall be punished, not only in his person, but in his posterity, for whom he thus treasures up wrath. *The sword shall not depart from David's house*; because he rewarded Uriah with evil, for his good services: The Jews stoned Christ for his good works; therefore is his blood upon them and upon their children.

14. The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention before it be meddled with.

Here is, 1. The danger that there is in *the beginning of strife*; one hot word, one peevish reflection, one angry demand, one spiteful contradiction, begets another, and that a third, and so on, till it proves like the cutting of a dam; when the water has got a little passage, it doth it self widen the breach, bears down all before it, and there is no stopping it, no reducing it then.

2. A good caution inferred from thence to take heed of the first spark of contention, and to put it out as soon as ever it appears. Dread the breaking of the ice; for if once broke it will break further; therefore leave it off, not only when you see the worst of it; for then it may be too late, but when you see the first of it; *obsta principiis*; leave it off even *before it be meddled with*; leave it off, if it were possible, before you begin.

15. He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just; even they both are abomination to the LORD.

This shews what an offence it is to God;

1. When those that are intrusted with the administration of publick justice, judges, juries, witnesses, prosecutors, counsel, do either acquit the guilty, or condemn those that are not guilty, or in the least contribute to either; this defeats the end of government, which is to protect the good; and punish the bad, *Rom.* xiii. 3, 4. It is equally provoking to God to *justify the wicked*, though it be in pity, and *in favorem vitæ*, as to *condemn the just*.

2. When any private persons plead for sin and sinners, palliate and excuse for wickedness, or argue against virtue and piety, and so *pervert the right ways of the Lord*, and confound the eternal distinctions between good and evil;

16. Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?

Two things are here spoken of with admiration :

1. God's great goodness to foolish man, in putting a price into his hand to get wisdom ; to get knowledge and grace to fit him for both worlds. We have rational souls, the means of grace, the stirrings of the Spirit, access to God by prayer, we have time and opportunity ; he that has a good estate (so some understand it) has advantages thereby of getting wisdom, by purchasing instruction : Good parents, relations, ministers, friends, are helps to get wisdom : It is a price, therefore of value, a talent ; it is a price in the hand, in possession, the word is nigh thee ; it is a price for getting ; it is for our own advantage, it is for getting wisdom, the very thing which, being fools, we have most need of. We have reason to admire, that God should so consider our necessity, and should intrust us with such advantages, though he foresaw we should not make a right improvement of them.

2. Man's great badness, his neglect of God's favour, and his own interest, which is very absurd and unaccountable ; he has no heart to it, not to the wisdom that is to be got, nor to the price, in the use of which it may be got. He has no heart, no skill, nor will, nor courage, to improve his advantages. He hath set his heart upon other things, so that he has no heart to his duty, or the great concerns of his soul. Wherefore should a price be thrown away and lost upon one so undeserving of it ?

17. A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

This speaks the strength of those bonds by which we are obliged to each other, and which we ought to be sensible of.

1. Friends must be constant to each other at all times ; it is not true friendship that is not constant, it will be so if it be sincere, and acted by a good principle. They that are fanciful or selfish in their friendship, will love no longer than their humour is pleased, and their interest served, and therefore their affections turn with the wind, and change with the weather ; swallow friends, that fly to you in summer, but are gone in winter ; such friends there is no loss of. But if the friendship be prudent, and generous, and cordial, if I love my friend, because he is wise, and virtuous, and good, as long as he continues so, though he fall into poverty and disgrace, still I will love him. Christ is a friend that loves at all times, John xiii. 1. and we must so love him, Rom. viii. 35.

2. Relations must in a special manner be careful and tender of one another in affliction. A brother is born to succour a brother or sister in distress, to whom he is joined so close by nature, that he may the more sensibly feel from their burthens, and be the more strongly inclined and engaged, as it were, by instinct to help them. We must often consider what we were born for, not only as men, but as in such a station and relation : Who knows but we came into such a family, for such a time as this ? We do not answer the end of our relations, if we do not do the duty of them. Some take it thus : A friend that loves at all times is born, i. e. becomes a brother in adversity, and is so to be valued.

18. A man void of understanding striketh hands, and becometh surety in the presence of his friend.

Though he had commended friendship in adversity, ver. 17. yet let not any, under pretence of being generous to their friends, be unjust to their families, and wrong them ; one part of our duty must be made to consist with another.

Note, 1. It is a piece of wisdom to keep out of debt as much as may be, especially to dread suretiship : There may be a just occasion for a man to pass his word for his friend in his absence, till he come to engage himself ; but to be surety in the presence of his friend, when he is upon the spot, supposeth that his own word will not be taken, he being deemed insolvent, or dishonest ; and then who can with safety pass his word for him ?

2. Those that are void of understanding, are commonly taken in this snare, to the prejudice of their families, and therefore ought not to be trusted too far with their own affairs, but to be under conduct.

19. He loveth transgression, that loveth strife : and he that exalteth his gate, seeketh destruction.

Note, 1. Those that are quarrelsome, involve themselves in a great deal of guilt. He that loves strife, that in his wordly business loves to go to law, in religion loves controversies, and in common converse loves to thwart, and fall out, that is never well but when he is in the fire, he loves transgression ; for a great deal of sin attends that sin, and the way of it is down hill. He pretends to stand up for truth, and for his honour and right, but really he loves sin, which God hates.

2. Those that are ambitious and aspiring, expose themselves to a great deal of trouble, such as many times ends in their ruin. He that exalteth his gate, builds a stately house, at least a fine frontispiece, that he may overtop and outshine his neighbours, he seeks his own destruction, and takes a deal of pains to ruin himself ; he makes his gate so large, that his house and estate go out at it.

20. He that hath a froward heart, findeth no good : and he that hath a perverse tongue, falleth into mischief.

Note, 1. Framing ill designs will be no advantage to us, there is nothing got by them. He that hath a froward heart, that sows discord, and is full of resentment, he cannot promise himself to get by it, sufficient to balance the loss of his repose and reputation, nor can he take any rational satisfaction in it ; he finds no good.

2. Giving ill language will be a great disadvantage to us. He that has a perverse tongue, spiteful and abusive, scurrilous or backbiting, he falls into one mischief or other, loses his friends, provokes his enemies, and pulls trouble upon his own head ; many a one has paid dear for an unbridled tongue.

21. He that begetteth a fool, doeth it to his sorrow : and the father of a fool hath no joy.

This speaks that very emphatically, which many wise and good men feel very sensibly, what a grievous, vexatious thing it is to have a foolish, wicked child. See here,

1. How uncertain all our creature comforts are, so that we are often not only disappointed in them, but that proves the greatest cross, in which we promised our selves most satisfaction. There was joy when a man child was born into the world, and yet if he prove vicious, his own father wisheth he had never been born : The name of Absalom signifies his father's peace, but he was his greatest trouble. It should moderate the desire of having children, and the delight of their parents in them, that they may prove a grief to them ; yet it should silence the murmurings of the afflicted father in that case, that if his son be a fool, he is a fool of his own begetting, and therefore he must make the best of him, and take it up as his cross, the rather, because Adam begets a son in his own likeness.

2. How unwise we are in suffering one affliction, and that of an untoward child, as likely as any other, to drown the sense of a thousand mercies. The father of a fool lays that so much to heart, that he has no joy of any thing else ; for which he may thank himself ; there are joys sufficient to balance even that sorrow.

22. A merry heart doth good like a medicine : but a broken spirit drieth the bones.

Note, 1. It is healthful to be chearful. The Lord is for the body, and has provided not only meat but medicine for it, and has here told us the best medicine is a merry heart ; not a heart addicted to vain, carnal, sensual mirth ; Solomon himself said of that mirth, it is not medicine but madness, it is not food but poison : What doth it ? But he means a heart rejoicing in God, and serving him with gladness ; and then taking the comfort of outward enjoyments, and particularly that of pleasant conversation. It is a great mercy that God gives us leave to be chearful, and cause to be chearful ; especially, if by his grace he gives us hearts to be chearful. This doth good to a medicine, so some read it, i. e. it will make physick work the better. Or, it doth good as a medicine to the body, making it easy and fit for business. But if mirth be a medicine (understand it of diversion and recreation) it must be used sparingly, only when there is occasion, not turned into food, and it must be used medicinally, sub regimine, and by rule.

2. The sorrows of the mind oft contribute very much to the sickness of the body. A broken spirit, sunk by the burthen of afflictions, and especially conscience wounded with the sense of guilt, and fear of wrath, dries the bones, wastes the radical moisture, exhausts the very marrow, and makes the body a meer skeleton. We should therefore watch and pray against all melancholy indispositions, for they lead us into trouble as well as into temptation.

23. A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.

See here, 1. What an ill thing bribery is. He is a wicked man, that will take a gift to engage him to give a false testimony, verdict, or judgment ; and when he doth it he is ashamed of it, for he takes it with all the secrecy imaginable out of the bosom where he knows it is laid ready for him ; it is industriously concealed, and so sily, that if he could he would hide it from his own conscience. A gift is taken out of the bosom of a wicked man, so some read it ; for he is an ill man that gives bribes, as well as he that takes them.

2. What a powerful thing it is. It is of such force, that it perverts the ways of judgment. The course of justice is not only obstructed, but turned into injustice ; and the greatest wrongs are done under colour of doing right.

24. Wisdom is before him that hath understanding : but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.

Note, 1. He is to be reckoned an intelligent man, that not only hath wisdom, but has it ready when he has occasion for it. He lays his wisdom before him, as his card and compass which he steers

steers by, has his eye always upon it, as he that writes has on his copy; and then he hath it *before him*, it is not to seek, but still at hand.

2. He that has a giddy head, a roving, rambling fancy, will never be fit for any solid business. He is a fool, and good for nothing, whose eyes are in the ends of the earth, here and there, and every where; any where but where they should be; that cannot fix his thoughts to one subject, nor pursue any one purpose with any thing of steadiness. When his mind should be applied to his study and business, it is filled with a thousand things, foreign and impertinent.

25. A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.

Observe, 1. Wicked children are an affliction to both their parents: They are an occasion of anger to the father (so the word signifies) because they contemn his authority; but of sorrow and bitterness to the mother, because they abuse her tenderness. The parents being joint-sufferers should therefore bring mutual comfort to bear them up under it, and strive to make it as easy as they can, the mother to mollify the father's anger, the father to alleviate the mother's grief.

2. That Solomon often repeats this remark; probably because it was his own case; however it is a common case.

26. Also to punish the just is not good, nor to strike princes for equity.

In differences that happen between magistrates and subjects, (and such differences often arise,)

1. Let magistrates see to it, that they never *punish the just*, that they be in no case a *terror to good works*, for that is to abuse their power, and betray that great trust which is reposed in them. It is *not good*, i. e. it is a very ill thing, and will end ill, whatever end they may aim at in it. When princes become tyrants and persecutors their thrones will be neither easy nor firm.

2. Let subjects see to it, that they do not find fault with the government for doing its duty, for it is an ill thing to *strike princes for equity*; by defaming their administration, or any secret attempts against them to strike at them; as the ten tribes that revolted reflected upon Solomon for imposing necessary taxes. Some read it, *nor to strike the ingenious for equity*; magistrates must take heed that none suffer under them for well-doing; nor must parents *provoke their children to wrath* by unjust rebukes.

27. He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit. 28. Even a fool when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.

Two ways a man may shew himself to be a wise man,

1. By the good temper of his mind, the sweetness and sedateness of that. *A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit, a precious spirit*, so the word is; he is one that looks well to his spirit, that it be as it should be, and so keeps it in an even frame, easy to himself and pleasant to others. A gracious spirit is a precious spirit, and renders a man amiable and *more excellent than his neighbour*. He is of a *cool spirit*, so some read it, not heated with passion, nor put into any tumult or disorder by the *impetus* of any corrupt affection, but even and stayed. A cool head with a warm heart is an admirable composition.

2. By the good government of his tongue.

1. A wise man will be *few of his words*, as being afraid of speaking amiss. *He that hath knowledge*, and aims to do good with it, is careful when he doth speak to speak to the purpose, and therefore saith little, that he may take time to deliberate upon it. He spares his words, because they are better spared than ill spent.

2. This is generally taken for such a sure indication of wisdom that a fool may gain the reputation of being a wise man, if he have but wit enough to hold his tongue, to hear and see and say little. If a fool hold his peace, men of candour will think him wise, because nothing appears to the contrary; and because it will be thought that he is making observations on what others say, and gaining experience; and is consulting with himself what he shall say, that he may speak pertinently. See how easy it is to gain mens good opinion, and to impose upon them. But when a *fool holds his peace*, God knows his heart, and the folly that is bound there; thoughts are words to him, and therefore he cannot be deceived in his judgment of men.

C H A P. XVIII.

THrough desire a man having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom.

The original here is difficult and differently understood.

1. Some take it as a rebuke to an affected singularity; when men take a pride in *separating themselves* from the sentiments and society of others, in contradicting all that has been said before them, and advancing new notions of their own; which, though never so absurd, they are wedded to, it is to gratify a desire, or lust, of vain glory, and they are seekers and meddlers with that which doth not belong to them; he *seeketh according to his desire and intermeddleth with every business*, pretends to pass a judgment upon every man's matter; he is morose and supercilious; those generally are so that are opinionative and conceited, and they thus make themselves ridiculous, and are vexatious to others.

2. Our translation seems to take it as an excitement to diligence in the pursuit of wisdom. If we would get knowledge and grace we must *desire* it, as that which we need, and will be of great advantage to us; 1 Cor. xii. 31. We must *separate ourselves* from all those things which would divert us from, or retard us in the pursuit, retire out of the noise of this world's vanities, and then *seek and intermeddle with all* the means and instructions of *wisdom*; be willing to take pains and try all the methods of improving ourselves; be acquainted with variety of opinions, that we may prove all things and hold fast that which is good.

2. A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover it self.

A fool may pretend to understanding, and to seek and intermeddle with the means of it; but,

1. He has no true delight in it; it is only to please his friends, or save his credit, but he doth not love his book, not love his business, not love his bible, not love his prayers, he would rather be playing the fool with his sports; those that take no pleasure in learning, or religion will make nothing to purpose of either. No progress is made in them, if they are a task and a drudgery.

2. He has no good design in it, only *that his heart may discover it self*, i. e. that he may have something to make a shew with, something wherewith to varnish his folly, that that may pass off the better; because he loves to hear himself talk.

3. When the wicked cometh, then cometh also contempt, and with ignominy reproach.

This may include a double sense:

1. That wicked people are scornful people, and put *contempt* upon others: when the wicked comes into any company, comes into the schools of wisdom, or into the assemblies for religious worship, *then cometh contempt of God*, and his people and ministers, of every thing that is said and done; you can expect no other from those that are profane; but that they will be scoffers; they will be an *ignominy* and *reproach*; they will flout and jeer every thing that is serious and grave; but let not wise and good men regard it, for the proverb of the ancients saith, *such wickedness proceedeth from the wicked*.

2. That wicked people are shameful people, and bring *contempt* upon themselves, for God hath said, that those *who despise him shall be lightly esteemed*. As soon as ever sin entered shame followed it, and sinners make themselves despicable. Nor do they only draw contempt upon themselves, but they bring *ignominy* and *reproach* upon their families, their friends, their ministers, and all that are any way related to them. Those therefore who would secure their honour must retain their virtue.

4. The words of a mans mouth are as deep waters, and the well-spring of wisdom as a flowing brook.

The similitudes here seem to be elegantly transposed:

1. The *well-spring of wisdom* is *as deep waters*, i. e. an intelligent knowing man has in him a good treasure of useful things, which furnisheth him with something to say upon all occasions that is pertinent and profitable: This is *as deep waters*, which make no noise, but never run dry.

2. The words of such a *man's mouth* are as a *flowing brook*; what he sees cause to speak flows naturally from him, and with a great deal of ease and freedom and natural fluency; it is clean and fresh, it is cleansing and refreshing, from his *deep waters* there flows what there is occasion for, to water those about him, as the brooks do the low grounds.

5. It is not good to accept the person of the wicked, to overthrow the righteous in judgment.

This justly condemns those who being employed in the administration of justice *pervert judgment*,

1. By conniving at mens crimes, and protecting and countenancing them in oppression and violence, because of their dignity and wealth, or some personal kindness they have for them. Whatever excuses men may make for it, certainly *it is not good* thus to *accept the person of the wicked*, it is an offence to God, an affront to justice, a wrong to mankind, and a real service done to the king-

kingdom of sin and Satan. The merits of the cause must be regarded, not the person.

2. By giving a cause against justice and equity, because the person is poor and low in the world, or not of the same party or persuasion, or a stranger of another country. This is *overthrowing the righteous in judgment*, who ought to be supported, and whom God will make to stand.

6. A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes. 7. A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.

Solomon has often shewed what mischief bad men do to others with their ungoverned tongues, here he shews what mischief they do to themselves.

1. They embroil themselves in quarrels. *A fool's lips*, without any cause or call, *enter into contention*, by advancing foolish notions which others find themselves obliged to oppose, and so a quarrel is begun: or, by giving provoking language, which will be refuted and satisfaction demanded: or, by setting men at defiance, and bidding *do if they dare*; proud men, and passionate men, and drunkards, are fools, whose lips *enter into contention*. A wise man may, against his will, be drawn into a quarrel, but he is a fool that of choice enters into it when he might avoid it, and he will repent it when it is too late.

2. They expose themselves to correction. The fool's mouth doth, in effect, *call for strokes*; he has said that which deserves to be punished with strokes, and is still saying that which needs to be checked and restrained with strokes, as Ananias unjustly commanded that Paul should be *smitten on the mouth*.

3. They involve themselves in ruin. *A fool's mouth*, which has been, or would have been the destruction of others, proves, at length, *his own destruction*, perhaps from men; Shimei's mouth was his own destruction, and Adonijah's, who spoke against his own head: and when a fool, by his foolish speaking, has run himself into a premunire, and thinks to bring himself off by justifying or excusing what he hath said, his defence proves his offence, and his lips are still the snare of his soul, entangling him yet more and more. However, when men by their evil words shall be condemned at God's bar, their mouths will be their destruction, and it will be such an aggravation of their ruin as will not admit one drop of water, one drop of comfort to *cool their tongue*, which is their snare, and will be their tormentor.

8. The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

Tale-bearers are those that secretly carry stories from house to house, which, perhaps, have some truth in them, but are secrets not fit to be told, or are basely misrepresented, and false colours put upon them, and are all told with design to blast mens reputation, to break their friendship, to make mischief between relations and neighbours, and set them at variance: now the words of such are here said to be,

1. *Like as when men are wounded*, so the margin reads it; they take on them to be very much affected with the miscarriages of such and such, and to be in pain for them, and pretend that it is with the greatest grief and reluctancy imaginable that they speak of them, they look as if they themselves were wounded by it; whereas really they *rejoice in iniquity*, are fond of the story, and tell it with pride and pleasure. Thus their words seem, but they *go down as poison into the innermost parts of the belly*, the pill being thus gilded, thus sugared.

2. *As wounds*, so the text reads it; as deep wounds, deadly wounds, *wounds in the innermost parts of the belly*: the *Venter medius*, or *infimus*, the *Thorax*, or the *Abdomen*, in either of which wounds are mortal. The words of the tale-bearer wound him of whom they are spoken, his credit and interest; and him to whom they are spoken, his love and charity; they occasion sin to him, which is a wound to the conscience; perhaps he seems to slight them, but they wound insensibly, by alienating his affections from one he ought to love.

9. He also that is slothful in his work, is brother to him that is a great waster.

Note, 1. Prodigality is very ill husbandry. Those are not only justly branded as fools among men, but will give an uncomfortable account to God of the talents they are intrusted with, who are wasters of their estates, who live above what they have, spend and give more than they can afford, and so, in effect, throw away what they have and suffer it to run waste.

2. Idleness is no better. He that is remiss in his work, whose hands *hang down*, (so the word signifies) that stands, as we say, with his thumbs in his mouth, that neglects his business, doth it not at all, or as if he did it not; he is own brother to him that is a prodigal, *i. e.* he is as much a fool, and in as sure and ready a way to poverty; one scatters what he has, the other lets it run through his fingers. The observation is too true in the affairs of religion; he that is trifling and careless in praying and hearing is

brother to him that doth not pray or hear at all; and omissions of duty and in duty, are as fatal to the soul as commissions of sin.

10. The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

Here is, 1. God's sufficiency for the saints. His *name is a strong tower* for them, in which they may take rest when they are weary, and take sanctuary when they are pursued, where they may be lifted up above their enemies, and fortified against them. There is enough in God, and in the discoveries which he has made of himself to us, to make us easy at all times; the wealth laid up in this tower is enough to enrich them, to be a continual feast, and a continuing treasure to them; the strength of this tower is enough to protect them; the name of the Lord is all that whereby he has made himself known as God, and our God, not only his titles and attributes, but his covenant and all the promises of it; these make up a tower, a strong tower, impenetrable, impregnable for all God's people.

2. The saints security in God. It is a strong tower to those who know how to make use of it as such, the righteous by faith and prayer, devotion towards God, and dependence on him, run into it, as their city of refuge, having made sure their interest in God's name, they take the comfort and benefit of it, they go out of themselves, retire from the world, live above, dwell in God, and God in them, and so they are safe, they do think themselves so, and they shall find themselves so.

11. The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit.

Having described the firm and faithful defence of the righteous man, *ver. 10.* he here shews what is the false and deceitful defence of the rich man, that has his portion and treasure in the things of this world, and sets his heart upon them; his wealth is as much his confidence, and he expects as much from it, as a godly man from his God.

See, 1. How he supports himself; he makes his wealth his city, where he dwells, where he rules with a great deal of self-complacency, as if he had a whole city under his command. It is his *strong city*, in which he intrencheth himself, and then sets danger at defiance, as if nothing could hurt him; *his scales are his pride*. His wealth is his wall in which he incloseth himself, and he thinks it a *high wall* which cannot be scaled, or got over, *John xxxi. 24. Rev. xviii. 7.*

2. How herein he cheats himself; it is a *strong city*, and a *high wall*, but it is so only in *his own conceit*, it will not prove to be really so, but like the house built on the sand, which will fail the builder when he most needs it.

12. Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility.

Note, 1. Pride is the preface of ruin, and ruin will at last be the punishment of pride; for *before destruction* men are commonly so insatuated by the just judgment of God, that they are more haughty than ever; that their ruin may be the sorer, and the more surprizing. Or, if that do not always hold, yet after the heart has been lifted up with pride a fall comes, *chap. xvi. 18.*

2. Humility is the preface of honour, and prepares men for it, and honour shall at length be the reward of humility, as he had said before, *chap. xv. 33.* That has need to be often said which men are so loth to believe.

13. He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.

See here how men often expose themselves by that very thing, with which they hope to gain applause.

1. Some take a pride in being quick, they answer a matter before they hear it, hear it out, nay, as soon as they but hear of it. They think it is their honour to take a thing presently, and when they have heard one side, think the matter so plain that they need not trouble themselves to hear the other, they are already apprized of it, and masters of all the merits of the cause. Whereas though a ready wit is a pretty thing to play with, it is solid judgment, and sound wisdom that doth business.

2. Those that take a pride in being quick commonly fall under the just reproach of being impertinent. It is folly for a man to go about to speak to a thing which he doth not understand, or to pass sentence upon a matter which he is not truly and fully informed of, and has no patience to make a strict enquiry into. And if it be folly, it is and will be shame.

14. The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?

Note, 1. Outward grievances are tolerable as long as the mind enjoys it self, and is at ease. Many infirmities, many calamities

we are liable to in this world, in body, name, and estate, which a man may bear, and bear up under if he have but good conduct and courage, and be able to act with reason and resolution, especially if he have a good conscience; and the testimony of that be for him; and if the *spirit of a man will sustain the infirmity*, much more will the spirit of a christian, or rather the Spirit of God witnessing, and working with our spirits in a day of trouble.

2. The grievances of the spirit are of all other most heavy, and hardly to be born; these make the shoulders sore, which should sustain the other infirmities. If the spirit be wounded by the disturbance of the reason, dejection under the trouble, whatever it is, and despair of relief; if the spirit be wounded by the amazing apprehensions of God's wrath for sin, and the fearful expectations of judgment and fiery indignation, *who can bear this?* Wounded spirits cannot help themselves, nor do others know how to help them. It is therefore wisdom to keep conscience void of offence.

15. The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.

Note, 1. Those that are prudent will seek knowledge, and apply their ear and heart to the pursuit of it. Their ear to attend to the means of knowledge, and their heart to mix faith with what they hear, and make a good improvement of it. Those that are prudent do not think they have prudence enough, but still see they have need of more, and the more prudent a man is, the more inquisitive will he be after knowledge, the knowledge of God and his duty, and the way to heaven, for that is the best knowledge.

2. Those that prudently seek knowledge, shall certainly get knowledge, for God never said to such, *seek in vain. Seek and ye shall find.* If the ear seeks it, the heart gets it, and keeps it, and is enriched by it. We must not only get knowledge into our heads, but get it into our hearts, get the favour and relish of it, apply what we know to our selves, and experience the power and influence of it.

16. A mans gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.

Of what great force gifts, *i. e.* bribes are, he had intimated before, chap. xvii. 8, 23. Here he shews the power of gifts, *i. e.* presents made even by inferiours to those that are above them, and have much more than they have. A good present will go far,

1. Towards a man's liberty; a man's gift, if he be in prison may procure his enlargement; there are courtiers, who, if they use their interest even for oppressed innocency, expect to be gratified for it. Or, if a mean man know not how to get access to a great man, he may do it by a fee to his servants, or a present to himself, those will make room for him.

2. Towards his preferment. It will bring him to sit among *great men*, in honour and power. See how corrupt this world is, when men's gifts will do that for them, which their merits will not do, though never so great; nay, will gain that for them which they are unworthy of, and unfit for; and no wonder those take bribes in their offices, who gave bribes for them. *Vendere jura potest, emerat ille prius.*

17. He that is first in his own cause, seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.

This shews that one tale is good till another is told.

1. He that speaks first will be sure to tell a straight story, and relate that only which makes for him, and put the best colour he can upon it, so that his cause shall appear good, whether it really be so or no.

2. The plaintiff having done his evidence, it is fit the defendant should be heard, should have leave to confront the witnesses, and cross-examine them, and shew the falshood and fallacy of what has been alledged, which, perhaps, may make the matter appear quite otherwise than it did. We must therefore remember that we have two ears to hear each side before we give judgment.

18. The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty.

Note, 1. Contentions commonly happen among the mighty, that are jealous for their honour and right, and stand upon the punctilio's of both, and are confident of their being able to make their part good, and therefore will hardly condescend to the necessary terms of an accommodation; whereas those that are poor are forced to be peaceable, and sit down losers.

2. Even the contentions of the mighty may be ended by lot, if they cannot otherwise be comprised, and sometimes better so than by arguments which are endless, or concessions which they are loth to stoop to, whereas it is no disparagement to a man to acquiesce in the determination of the lot, when once it is referred to that. To prevent quarrels, Canaan was divided by lot; and if lufory lots had not profaned this way of appeal to providence, perhaps it might be very well used now for the deciding of many controversies, both to the honour of God, and the satisfaction of

the parties, provided it be done with prayer, and due solemnity; this, and some other scriptures seeming to direct to it, especially, *Acts i. 26.* And if the law be a lottery (as some have called it) it were as good a lottery were the law.

19. A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.

Note, 1. Great care must be taken to prevent quarrels among relations, and those that are under special obligation to each other; not only because, they are most unnatural and unbecoming, but because between such things are as commonly taken most unkindly, and resentments are apt to be carried too far. Wisdom and grace would indeed make it most easy to us to forgive our relations and friends if they offend us, but corruption makes it most difficult to forgive them; let us therefore take heed of disobliging a brother, or one that has been as a brother; ingratitude is very provoking.

2. Great pains must be taken to compromise matters in variance between relations with all speed, because it is a work of so much difficulty, and consequently the more honourable if it be done. Esau was a *brother offended*, and seemed harder to be won than a *strong city*, yet by a work of God upon his heart, in answer to Jacob's prayer he was won.

20. A mans belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled:

Note, 1. Our comfort depends very much upon the testimony of our own consciences, for us, or against us. The belly is here put for the conscience, as chap. xx. 27. Now it is of great consequence to us whether that be satisfied, and what that is filled with, for accordingly will our satisfaction be, and our inward peace.

2. The testimony of our consciences will be for us, or against us, according as we have, or have not governed our tongues well. According as *the fruit of the mouth* is, good, or bad, unto iniquity, or unto righteousness, accordingly the character of the man is, and consequently the testimony of his conscience concerning him. "We ought to take as great care about the words we speak, as we do about the fruit of our trees, or the increase of the earth, which we are to eat; for according as they are wholesome, or unwholesome, so will the pleasure or the pain be wherewith we shall be filled. So bishop Patrick;

21. Death and life are in the power of the tongue; and they that love it, shall eat the fruit thereof.

Note, 1. A man may do a great deal of good, or a great deal of hurt, both to others and to himself, according to the use he makes of his tongue. Many a one has been his own death by a foul tongue, or others death by a false tongue; and on the contrary, many a one hath saved his own life, or procured the comfort of it, by a prudent gentle tongue, and saved others lives with a seasonable testimony, or intercession for them. And if by our words we must be justified or condemned, no doubt; *death and life are in the power of the tongue.* Tongues were *Æsop's* best meat, and his worst.

2. Mens words will be judged of by the affections with which they speak; he that doth not only speak aright, (which a bad man may do to save his credit, or please his company) but loves to speak so, speaks well of choice, and with delight; to him it will be life; and he that doth not only speak aright (which a good man may do through inadvertency) but loves to speak so, (*Psal. lii. 4.*) to him it will be death. As men *love it* they shall eat the fruit of it.

22. Whofo findeth a wife, findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.

Note, 1. A good wife is a great blessing to a man. He that finds a wife, that is, a wife indeed (an ill wife doth not deserve to be called by a name of so much honour) that finds a help-meet for him, that is a wife in the original acceptation of the word; that sought such a one with care and prayer, and has found what he sought, he has found a *good thing*, a jewel of great value, a rare jewel, he has found that which will not only contribute more than any thing to his comfort in this life, but will forward him in the way to heaven.

2. God is to be acknowledged in it with thankfulness; it is a token of his favour, and happy pledge of further favours; it is a sign God delights in a man to do him good, and has mercy in store for him. For this therefore God must be sought unto.

23. The poor useth intreaties; but the rich answereth roughly.

Note, 1. Poverty, though many inconveniencies to the body attend it, yet it has often a good effect upon the spirit, for it makes

men humble, and submissive, and mortifies their pride; it teacheth them to use entreaties; when necessity forceth men to beg, it tells them they must not prescribe or demand, but take what is given them and be thankful. At the throne of God's grace we are all poor, and must use entreaties; not answer, but make application, must sue *sub forma pauperis*.

2. A prosperous condition, though it has many advantages, yet has often this mischief attending it, that it makes men proud, and haughty, and imperious. *The rich answers the intreaties of the poor roughly*, as Nabal answered David's messengers with railing. It is a very foolish humour of some rich men, especially those who have risen from little, that they think their riches will warrant them to give hard words, and even where they do not design any rough dealing, yet that it becomes them to answer roughly, whereas gentlemen ought to be gentle, *James iii. 17*.

24. A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

Solomon here recommends friendship to us, and shews,

1. What we must do that we may contract and cultivate friendship; we must shew our selves friendly. Would we have friends and keep them, we must not only not affront them, or quarrel with them, but we must love them, and make it appear that we do so, by all expressions that are endearing; by being free with them, pleasing to them, visiting them, and bidding them welcome, and especially by doing all the good offices we can, and serving them in every thing that lies in our power, that is *shewing our selves friendly*.

Si vis amari, ama. Sen.
Ut ameris amabilis esto. Ovid.

2. That it is worth while to do so, for we may promise our selves a great deal of comfort in a true friend; a brother indeed is *born for adversity*, as he had said, *chap. xvii. 17*. and in our troubles we expect comfort and relief from our relations, but sometimes there is a friend that is nothing akin to us, the bonds of whose esteem and love prove stronger than those of nature, and therefore he *sticks closer than a brother*, and when it comes to a pinch, will do more for us than a brother will. Christ is a friend to all believers, that *sticks closer than a brother*, to him therefore let them shew themselves friendly.

C H A P. XIX.

1. **B**etter is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool.

Here see, 1. What will be the credit and comfort of a poor man, and make him more excellent than his neighbour, though his poverty may expose him to contempt, and may dispirit him. Let him be honest and *walk in integrity*, let him keep a good conscience, and make it appear that he doth so, let him always speak and act with sincerity, when he is under the greatest temptations to dissemble and break his word, and then let him value himself upon that, for all wise and good men will value him. He is better, has a better character, is in a better condition, is better beloved, and lives to better purpose than many a one that looks great, and makes a figure.

2. What will be the shame of a rich man, notwithstanding all his pomp, if he have a shallow head, and an ill tongue, if he is *perverse in his lips, and is a fool*, if he is a wicked man, and gets what he has by fraud and oppression, he is a fool, and an honest poor man is to be preferred far before him.

2. Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good; and he that hasteth with his feet sinneth.

Two things are here shewed to be of ill consequence,

1. Ignorance; *to be without the knowledge of the soul is not good*, so some read it; know we not our own selves, our own hearts. *A soul without knowledge is not good*; it is a great privilege that we have souls, but if these souls have not knowledge, what the better are we? If man have not understanding he is as the beasts, *Psal. xlix. 20*. An ignorant soul cannot be a good soul. That the soul be without knowledge is not safe, nor pleasant; what good can the soul do, or what is it good for if it be without knowledge.

2. Rashness. *He that hasteth with his feet*, that doth things inconsiderately, and with precipitation, and will not take time to ponder the path of his feet, he sinneth, he cannot chuse but miss it often, and take many a false step, which those prevent that consider their ways. As good not know as not consider.

3. The foolishness of a man perverteth his way: and his heart fretteth against the LORD.

We have here two instances of mens folly.

1. That they bring themselves into straits and troubles, and run themselves a-ground, and embarrass themselves. *The foolishness of man perverteth his way*. Men meet with crosses and disappointments in their affairs, and things do not succeed as they expected and wished, and it is long of themselves, and their own folly; it is their own iniquity that corrects them.

2. That when they have done so they lay the blame upon God, and their hearts fret against him, as if he had done them wrong, whereas really they wrong themselves. In fretting we are enemies to our own peace, and become self-tormentors; in fretting against the Lord, we affront him, his justice, goodness, and sovereignty; and this is very absurd, that from the trouble which we pull upon our own heads by our wilfulness, or neglect; we quarrel with him when we ought to blame our selves, for it is our own doing. See *Isa. l. 1*.

4. Wealth maketh many friends; but the poor is separated from his neighbour.

Here, 1. We may see how strong mens love of money is, that they will love any man, how undeserving soever he be otherwise, if he has but a deal of money, and is free of it, so that they may hope to be the better for it. Wealth enables men to send many presents, make many entertainments, and do many good offices, and so gains them many friends; who pretend to love him, for they flatter him, and make their court to him, but really love what he hath; or rather love themselves, hoping to get by him.

2. We may see how weak mens love of one another is; he that while he prospered was loved and respected, if he fall into poverty, is separated from his neighbour, is not owned, or looked upon, not visited, or regarded, is bid to keep his distance, and told he is troublesome, even one that has been his neighbour, and acquaintance shall turn his face from him, and pass by on the other side; because mens consciences tell them they ought to relieve and succour such, they are willing to have this excuse, that they did not see them.

5. A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape.

Here is, 1. The sins threatened; bearing false witness in judgment, and speaking lies in common conversation. Men could not arrive at such a pitch of impiety as to bear false witness, where to the guilt of a lie, is added that of perjury and injury, if they had not advanced to it, by allowing themselves to speak untruths in jest and banter, or under pretence of doing good. Thus men teach their tongues to speak lies, *Jer. ix. 5*. And those that will take a liberty to tell lies in discourse, are in a fair way to be guilty of the greater wickedness of false-witness-bearing, whenever they are tempted to it, though they had seemed to detest it. They that can swallow a false word debase their consciences, so that a false oath will not choke them.

2. The threatening it self; they shall not go unpunished, they shall not escape. This intimates, that that which emboldens them in the sin, is hopes of impunity. And that it is a sin which commonly escapes punishment from men, though the law was strict, *Deut. xix. 18, 19*. But it shall not escape the righteous judgment of God, who is jealous, and will not suffer his name to be profaned; we know where all liars will have their everlasting portion.

6. Many will intreat the favour of the prince; and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts. 7. All the brethren of the poor do hate him: how much more do his friends go far from him? he pursueth them with words, yet they are wanting to him.

These two verses are a comment upon *ver. 4.* and shew,

1. How those that are rich and great are courted and caressed, and have suiters, and servants in abundance. The prince that has power in his hand, and preferments at his dispose, has his gate crowded, and his anti-chamber thronged with petitioners, that are ready to adore him for what they can get, many will entreat his favour, and think themselves happy in it. Even great men are humble supplicants to the prince. How earnest then should we be for the favour of God, which is far beyond that of any earthly prince. But it should seem liberality will go further than majesty it self to gain respect, for they are many that court the prince, but every man is a friend to him that gives gifts; not only those that have received, or do expect gifts from him, will as friends be ready to serve him, but others also will as friends give him their good word. Prodigals that are foolishly free of what they have, will have many hangers-on that will cry them up as long as it lasts, but will leave them when it is done: Those that are prudently generous, make an interest by it, which may stand them in good stead; they that are accounted benefactors exercise an authority, which may give them an opportunity of doing good, *Luke xxii. 25*.

2. How those that are poor and low are slighted and despised. It should not be so, we must honour all men, even under their greatest abasements, men may, if they please court the prince, and the

the princely, but they may not trample upon the poor, and look at them with disdain; yet so it is oftentimes, *all the brethren of the poor do hate him*, even his own relations are shy of him, because he is needy and craving, and expects something from them; and because they look upon him as a blemish to their family; and then, no marvel, if others of his friends that were nothing akin to him *go far from him*, to get out of his way; *he pursues them with words*, hoping to prevail with them by his importunity to be kind to him, but not they, they have nothing for him. *They pursue him with words*, so some understand it, to excuse themselves from giving him any thing; they tell him he is idle and impertinent, that he has brought himself into poverty, and therefore ought not to be relieved; as Nabal said to David's messengers, *There are many servants now a days that run away from their masters*, and how do I know but that David may be one of them? Let poor people therefore make God their friend, pursue him with their prayers, and he will not be wanting to them.

8. He that getteth wisdom, loveth his own soul: he that keepeth understanding, shall find good.

They are here encouraged,

1. That take pains to get wisdom, to get knowledge, and grace, and acquaintance with God, they that do so, shew that they love their own souls, and will be found to have done themselves the greatest kindness imaginable; no man ever *hated his own flesh*, but loves that, yet many are wanting in love to their own souls, for those only love their souls, and consequently love themselves aright that get wisdom, true wisdom.

2. That take care to keep it when they have got it, it is health, and wealth, and honour, and all to the soul, and therefore he that keepeth understanding, as he shews that he loves his own soul, so he shall certainly find good, all good. He that retains the good lessons he has learnt, and orders his conversation according to them, he shall find the benefit and comfort of it in his own soul, and shall be happy here and for ever.

9. A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish.

Here is, 1. A repetition of what was said before, *ver. 5.* for we have need to be again and again warned of the danger of the sin of lying and false-witness-bearing, since nothing is of more fatal consequence.

2. An addition to it in one word; there it was said, *he that speaks lies shall not escape*, and intimated; that he shall be punished. Here it is said his punishment shall be such as will be his destruction, *he shall perish*; the lies he forged against others will be his own ruin. It is a damning, destroying sin.

10. Delight is not seemly for a fool: much less for a servant to have rule over princes.

Note, 1. Pleasure and liberty ill become a fool: *Delight is not seemly* for such a one: A man that has not wisdom and grace has no right or title to true joy, and therefore it is unseemly: those that do not delight in God, it ill becomes them to delight in any thing else: He knows not how to use it, nor how to manage himself in it, and therefore doth but expose himself. It becomes ungracious fools to be afflicted; and mourn, and weep, not to laugh and be merry; rebukes are more proper for them than delights. Delight is seemly for a man of business, to refresh him when he is fatigued, but not for a fool, that lives an idle life, and abuseth his recreations. *The prosperity of fools discovers their folly, and destroys them.*

2. Power and honour ill become a man of a servile spirit. Nothing more unseemly than for a servant to have rule over princes; it is absurd in it self, and very preposterous; for none so insolent and intolerable as a beggar on horseback, *a servant when he reigns*, Prov. xxx. 22. It is very unseemly for one that is a servant to sin and his lusts, to rule over and oppress those that are God's freemen, and made kings and priests to him.

11. The discretion of a man deferreth his anger, and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.

A wise man will observe these two rules about his anger.

1. Not to be over-hasty in his resentments. *Discretion* teacheth us to defer our anger; to defer the admission of it, till we have thoroughly considered all the merits of the provocation, seen them in a true light, and weighed them in a just balance; and then to defer the prosecution of it, till there be no danger of running into any indecencies. Plato said to his servant, I would beat thee, but that I am angry. Give it time, and it will cool.

2. Not to be over-critical in his resentments. Whereas it is commonly looked upon as a piece of ingenuity to apprehend an affront quickly, it is here made a man's glory to pass over a transgression, to take on him he doth not see it, *Psalms xxxviii. 13.* or if he sees fit to take notice of it, yet to forgive it; and meditate no revenge.

12. The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his favour is as dew upon the grass.

This is to the same purpose with what we had, chap. xvi. 14, 15. and the design of it is,

1. To make kings wise and considerate in dispensing their frowns and smiles; they are not like those of common persons; their frowns are very terrible, and their smiles very comfortable; and therefore it concerns them to be very careful that they never frighten a good man from doing well with their frowns, nor ever give countenance to a wicked man in doing ill with their smiles; for then they abuse their influence, *Rom. xiii. 3.*

2. To make subjects faithful and dutiful to their princes: Let them be restrained from all disloyalty with the consideration of the dreadful consequence of having the government against them; and let them be encouraged in all good services to the publick with the hopes of the favour of their prince. Christ is a king, whose wrath against his enemies will be *as the roaring of a lion*, Rev. x. 3. and his favour to his own people as the refreshing dew; *Psalms lxxii. 6.*

13. A foolish son is the calamity of his father; and the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping.

It is an instance of the vanity of the world, that we are liable to the greatest griefs in those things wherein we promise our selves the greatest comfort. It is as it proves. What greater temporal comfort can a man have than a good wife, and good children, and yet,

1. *A foolish son* is a great affliction; and may make a man wish a thousand times he had been written childless. A son that will apply himself to no study or business, will take no advice, that lives a lewd, loose, rakish life, and spends what he has extravagantly, games it away, and wastes it in the excess of riot; or that is proud, and foppish; and conceited; such a one is the grief of his father, because he is the disgrace, and is likely to be the ruin of his family. He hates all his labour when he sees who he must leave the fruit of it to.

2. A cross, peevish wife is as great an affliction. Her contentions are continual, every day, and every hour in the day, she finds some occasion to make her self, and those about her uneasy; those that are given to chide well, never want something or other to chide at; but it is a continual dropping, that is, a continual vexation, as it is to have a house so much out of repair that it rains in, and a man cannot lie dry in it. That man has an uncomfortable life, and has need of a great deal of wisdom and grace to enable him to bear his affliction, and do his duty, that has a sot to his son, and a scold to his wife.

14. House and riches are the inheritance of fathers; and a prudent wife is from the LORD.

Note, 1. A discreet and virtuous wife is a choice gift of God's providence to a man: A wife that is prudent, in opposition to one that is contentious, *ver. 13.* For though a wife that is continually finding fault, may think it is her wit and wisdom to be so, it is really her folly; a prudent wife is meek and quiet, and makes the best of every thing. If a man has such a wife, let him not ascribe it to the wisdom of his own choice, or his own management, for the wisest have been deceived, both in and by a woman, but let him ascribe it to the goodness of God, who made him a help-meet for him, and, perhaps, by some hits and turns of providence, that seemed casual, brought her to him: Every creature is what he makes it. Happy marriages we are sure are made in heaven; Abraham's servant prayed in the belief of this, *Gen. xxiv. 12.*

2. It is a more valuable gift than house and riches, contributes more to the comfort and credit of a man's life, and the welfare of his family, is a greater token of God's favour, and about which the divine providence is in a more especial manner conversant. A good estate may be the inheritance of fathers, which, by the common direction of providence, comes in course to a man; but no man has a good wife by descent or entail. Parents that are worldly, in disposing their children, look no further than to match them to house and riches, but if withal it was to a prudent wife, let God have the glory.

15. Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.

See here the evil of a sluggish, slothful disposition:

1. It stupifies men, and makes them senseless and mindless of their own affairs, as if they were cast into a deep sleep, dreaming much, but doing nothing. Slothful people doze away their time, bury their talents, live a useless life; and are the unprofitable burthens of the earth; for any service they do when they are awake, they had as good be always asleep. Even their souls are idle, and lulled asleep, their rational powers chilled and frozen.

2. It impoverisheth men, and brings them to want; they that will not labour cannot expect to eat, but must suffer hunger. An idle soul, i. e. one that is idle in the affairs of his soul, that takes

no care or pains to work out his salvation, shall perish for want of that which is necessary to the life and happiness of the soul.

16. He that keepeth the commandment, keepeth his own soul; but he that despiseth his ways, shall die.

Here is, 1. The happiness of those that walk circumspectly. They that make conscience of *keeping the commandment* in every thing, that live by rule, as becomes servants and patients, they *keep their own souls*, they secure their present peace, and future bliss, and provide every way well for themselves. If we keep God's word, God's word will keep us from every thing really hurtful.

2. The misery of those that live at large, and never mind what they do: They that *despise their ways*, shall die, shall perish eternally, they are in the high road to ruin. Those that are careless about the end of their ways, and never consider whither they are going; and about the rule of their ways, that will walk in the way of their hearts, and after the course of the world, *Ecc. xi. 9.* that never consider what they have done, or what they are concerned to do, but *walk at all adventures*, *Lev. xxvi. 21.* right or wrong, it is all one to them; what can come of this but the greatest mischief?

17. He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given, will he pay him again.

Here is, 1. The duty of charity described. It includes two things: (1.) Compassion; which is the inward principle of charity in the heart; it is to *have pity on the poor*; those that have not a penny for the poor, yet may have a pity for them, a charitable concern and sympathy; and if a man *give all his goods to feed the poor*, and have not this charity in his heart, *it is nothing*, *1 Cor. xiii. 3.* We must *draw out our souls to the hungry*, *Isa. lviii. 10.* (2.) Bounty and liberality. We must not only pity the poor, but give according to their necessity, and our ability, *James ii. 15, 16.* *That which he has given.* Margin, *His deed.* It is charity to do for the poor, as well as to give; and thus, if they have their limbs and senses, they may be charitable to one another.

2. The encouragement of charity. (1.) A very kind construction shall be put upon it: What is given to the poor, or done for them, God will place it to account as lent to him, *lent upon interest*, so the word signifies; he takes it kindly as if it were done to himself, and he would have us to take the comfort of it, and to be as well pleased as ever any usurer was when he had let out a sum of money into good hands. (2.) A very rich recompence shall be made for it; *he will pay him again*, in temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings. Almsgiving is the surest and safest way of thriving.

18. Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.

Parents are here cautioned against a foolish indulgence of their children, that are untoward and viciously inclined, and that discover such an ill temper of mind as is not likely to be cured but by severity.

1. Do not say it is all in good time to correct them; no, as soon as ever there appears a corrupt disposition in them, check it presently, before it gets head, and takes root, and is hardened into a habit. *Chasten thy son while there is hope*, for, perhaps, if he be let alone a-while, he will be past hope, and a much greater chastening will not do that which now a less would effect. It is easiest plucking up weeds as soon as they spring up, and the bullock that is designed for the yoke should be betimes accustomed to it.

2. Do not say it is pity to correct them, and that because they cry and beg to be forgiven, you cannot find in your heart to do it; if the point will be gained without correction, well and good; but if you find, as it oft proves, that your forgiving them once upon a dissembled repentance, and promise of amendment, doth but embolden them to offend again, especially, if it be a thing that is in it self sinful, as lying, swearing, ribaldry, stealing, or the like, in such a case put on resolution, *and let not thy soul spare for his crying.* It is better he should cry under thy rod, than under the sword of the magistrate, or, which is more fearful, that of divine vengeance.

19. A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment: for if thou deliver him, yet thou must do it again.

1. As we read this, it speaks, in short, that angry men never want wo; those that are of strong, or rather headstrong passions, commonly bring themselves and their families into trouble by vexatious suits and quarrels, and the provocations they give; they are still smarting in one instance or other for their ungoverned heats; and if their friends deliver them out of one trouble, they will presently involve themselves in another, and they *must do it again*. All which trouble to themselves and others would be prevented if they would mortify their passions, and get the rule of their own spirits.

2. It may as well be read, *He that is of great wrath*, meaning the child that is to be corrected, and is impatient of rebuke, cries and makes a noise, even that wrath of his against the rod of correction *deserves to be punished*; for if thou deliver him for the sake of that, thou wilt be forced to punish him so much the more the next time. A stomachful, high-spirited child must be subdued sometimes, or it will be the worse for it.

20. Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayst be wise in thy latter end.

Note, 1. It is well with those that are *wise in their latter end*, wise for their latter end, for their future state, wise for another world; that are found wise when their latter end comes; wise virgins, wise builders, wise stewards; that are wise at length, and *understand the things that belong to their peace, before they be hid from their eyes.* A carnal worldling at his end shall be a fool, *Jer. xvii. 11.* but godliness will prove wisdom at last.

2. Those that would be *wise in their latter end*, must *hear counsel, and receive instruction*, in their beginnings, must be willing to be taught and ruled, willing to be advised and reprov'd when they are young. Those that would be stored in winter must gather in summer.

21. There are many devices in a man's heart: nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.

Here is, 1. Men projecting. They keep their designs to themselves, but they cannot hide them from God, he knows the *many devices that are in mens hearts*, devices against his counsel, as those, *Psal. ii. 1, 2, 3.* *Mic. iv. 11.* devices without his counsel, no regard had to his providence, as those, *James iv. 13.* This and the other they will do, and not take God along with them; devices unlike God's counsels; men are wavering in their devices, and often absurd and unjust, but God's counsels are wise and holy, steady and uniform.

2. God over-ruling. Various men have various designs, according as their inclination and interest leads them, but *the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand*, whatever comes of the devices of men. His counsel often breaks mens measures, and baffles their devices, but their devices cannot in the least alter his counsel, or disturb the proceedings of it, or put him upon new counsels, *Isa. xiv. 24.* *xlvi. 11.* What a check doth this give to politick, designing men, who think they can outwit all mankind, there is a God in heaven that laughs at them! *Psal. ii. 5.* What comfort doth this speak to all God's people, that all God's purposes, which we are sure are right and good, shall be accomplished in due time.

22. The desire of a man is his kindness: and a poor man is better than a liar.

Note, 1. The honour of doing good is what we may laudably be ambitious of: It cannot but be *the desire of a man*, if he have any spark of virtue in him, to be kind; one would not covet an estate for any thing so much, as thereby to be put into a capacity of relieving the poor, and obliging our friends.

2. It is far better to have a heart to do good, and want ability for it, than have ability for it, and want a heart to it. *The desire of a man*, to be kind, and charitable, and generous, *is his kindness*, and shall so be construed; both God and man will accept his good-will, *according to what he has*, and will not expect more. *And a poor man*, that wisheth you well, but can promise you nothing, because he has nothing to be kind with, *is better than a liar*, than a rich man, who makes you believe he will do mighty things, but when it comes to the setting to he will do nothing. The character of the men of low degree, that they are vanity, from whom nothing is expected, is better than that of men of high degree, that they are a lie, they deceive those whose expectations they raised.

23. The fear of the LORD tendeth to life, and he that hath it shall abide satisfied: he shall not be visited with evil.

See what they get by it that live in the fear of God, and always make conscience of their duty to him.

1. Safety. They *shall not be visited with evil*; they may be visited with sickness, or other afflictions, but there shall be no evil in them, nothing to hurt them, because nothing to separate them from the love of God, or to hurt the soul.

2. Satisfaction. They *shall abide satisfied*; they shall have those comforts which are satisfying, and shall have a constant contentment and complacency in them: It is a satisfaction which will abide, whereas all the satisfactions of sense are transient, and soon gone. *Satur pernoctabit*, i. e. *non cubabit incaenatus*; he shall not go supperless to bed; he shall have that which will make him easy, and be an entertainment to him in his silent and solitary hours, *Psal. xvi. 6, 7.*

3. True and compleat happiness. Serious godliness has a direct tendency to life, to all good, to eternal life; it is the sure and ready way

way to it: There is something in the nature of it fitting men for heaven, and so leading them to it.

24. A slothful *man* hideth his hand in *his* bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.

A sluggard is here exposed as a fool, for,

1. All his care is to save himself from labour and cold. See his posture; he *hideth his hand in his bosom*, pretends he is lame and cannot work; his hands are cold, and he must warm them in his bosom; and when they are warm, there he must keep them so: He hugs himself in his own ease, and is resolved against labour and hardship. Let those work that love it, for his part he thinks no such fine life as sitting still, and doing nothing.

2. He will not be at the pains to feed himself; an elegant hyperbole; as we say, a man is so lazy that he would not shake fire off him; so here, he cannot find in his heart to take his hand out of his bosom, no, not to put meat into his own mouth. If the law be so, that those that will not labour must not eat, he will rather starve than stir: Thus his sin is his punishment, and therefore his egregious folly.

25. Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware; and reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge.

Note, 1. The punishment of scorers will be a means of good to others. When men are so hardened in wickedness, that they will not themselves be wrought upon by the severe methods that are used to reclaim and reform them, yet such methods must be used for the sake of others, that *they may hear and fear*, Deut. xix. 20. If the *scorner* will not be recovered from his sin, the disease being inveterate, yet *the simple will beware* of venturing upon the sin which exposes men thus. If it cure not the infected, it may prevent the spreading of the infection.

2. The reproof of wise men will be a means of good to themselves; they need not be smitten; a word to the wife is enough; do but *reprove one that has understanding*, and he will so far understand himself, and his own interest, that he will *understand knowledge* by it, and not miss it again through ignorance and inadvertency, when once he has been told of it; so kindly doth he take reproof, and so wisely improve it.

26. He that wasteth *his* father, and chafeth away *his* mother, is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach.

Here is, 1. The sin of a prodigal son. Besides the wrong he doth to himself, he is injurious to his good parents, and basely ungrateful to them that were the instruments of his being, and have taken so much care and pains about him, which is a great aggravation of his sin, and renders it exceeding sinful in the eyes of God and man; *he wasteth his father*, wastes his estate which he should have to support him in his old age, wastes his spirits, and breaks his heart, and brings his gray head *with sorrow to the grave*. He *chafeth away his mother*, alienates her affections from him, which cannot be done without a great deal of regret and uneasiness to her; he makes her weary of the house with his rudeness and insolence, and glad to retire for a little quietness; and when he has spent all, turns her out of doors.

2. The shame of a prodigal son. It is a shame to himself that he should be so brutish and unnatural; he makes himself odious to all mankind; it is a shame to his parents and family, who are reflected upon, though, perhaps, without just cause, for teaching him no better, or being some way wanting to him.

27. Cease, my son, to hear the instruction, *that causeth* to err from the words of knowledge.

This is a good caution to those who have had a good education, to take heed of hearkning to those, who, under pretence of instructing them, draw them off from those good principles, under the influence of which they were trained up. Observe,

1. There is that which seems designed for the instruction, but really tends to the destruction of young men. The factors for vice will undertake to teach them a free thought, and a fashionable conversation; how to palliate the sins they have a mind to, and stop the mouth of their own consciences; how to get clear of the restraints of their education, and to set up for wits and beaux: This is *the instruction which causeth to err from the forms of sound words*, which should be held fast in faith and love.

2. It is the wisdom of young men to turn a deaf ear to such instructions, as the adder to the charms that are designed to ensnare her. Dread hearing such talk as tends to instil loose principles into the mind; and if thou art linked in with such, break off from them; thou hast heard enough, or too much, and therefore hear no more of the evil communication which corrupts good manners.

28. An ungodly witness scorneth judgment: and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity.

Here is a description of the worst of sinners, whose hearts are *fully set in them to do evil*.

1. They set that at defiance which would deter and detain them from sin. *An ungodly witness* is one that bears false witness against his neighbour, and will forswear himself to do another a mischief, in which there is not only great injustice, but great impiety; this is one of the worst of men. Or, *an ungodly witness* is one that profanely and atheistically witnesseth against religion and godliness, whose instructions seduce *from the words of knowledge*, ver. 27. such a one *scorneth judgment*, laughs at the terrors of the Lord, mocks at that fear, Job xv. 26. Tell him of law and equity, that the scriptures, and an oath are sacred things, and not to be jested with, that there will come a reckoning day; he laughs at it all, and scorns to heed it.

2. They are greedy, and glad of that which gives them an opportunity to sin. *The mouth of the wicked eagerly devours iniquity, drinks it in like water*, Job xv. 16.

29. Judgments are prepared for scorers, and stripes for the back of fools.

Note, 1. Scorers are fools; those that ridicule things sacred and serious, do but make themselves ridiculous; *their folly shall be manifest unto all men*.

2. Those that *scorn judgments* cannot escape them, ver. 28. The unbelief of man shall not make God's threatenings of no effect; they that *devour iniquity* swallow the hook with the bait. The civil magistrate hath *judgments prepared for scorers*, for otherwise he would *bear the sword in vain*; but if he be remiss, and connive at sin, yet God's judgments slumber not, they are prepared, Matt. xxv. 41.

C H A P. XX.

1. **W**INE is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whoso is deceived thereby is not wise.

Here is, 1. The mischief of drunkenness: *Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging*; it is so to the sinner himself, it mocks him, makes a fool of him, promiseth him that satisfaction which it can never give him; it smiles upon him at first, but *at the last it bites*, in reflection upon it it rages in his conscience; it is raging in the body, puts the humours into a ferment. *When the wine is in the wit is out*, and then the man, according as his natural temper is, either mocks like a fool, or rageth like a mad-man. Drunkenness, which pretends to be a sociable thing, renders men unfit for society, for it makes them abusive with their tongues, and outrageous in their passions, chap. xxiv. 29.

2. The folly of drunkards is easily inferred from thence. He that *is deceived thereby*, that suffers himself to be drawn into this sin when he is so plainly warned of the consequences of it, he *is not wise*, he shews that he has no right sense or consideration of things, and not only so, but he renders himself incapable of getting wisdom; for it is a sin that insatuates and befots men, and takes away their heart. A drunkard is a fool, and a fool he is like to be.

2. The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: *whoso* provoketh him to anger, sinneth against his own soul.

See here, 1. How formidable kings are, and what a terror they strike upon those they are angry with. Their *fear* with which (especially when they are absolute, and their will is a law) they keep their subjects in awe, *is as the roaring of a lion*, which is very dreadful to the creatures he preys upon, and makes them tremble, so that they cannot over-run him. Those princes that rule by wisdom and love, rule like God himself, and bear his image; but those that rule merely by terror, and with a high hand, do but rule like a lion in the forest, with a brutal power. *Oderint dum metuant*.

2. How unwise therefore they are that quarrel with them, that are angry at them, and so *provoke them to anger*: They *sin against their own lives*; much more do they do so that provoke the King of kings to anger. *Nemo me impune lacessit*.

3. It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling.

This is designed to rectify mens mistakes concerning strife.

1. Men think it is their wisdom to engage in quarrels; whereas it is the greatest folly that can be. He thinks himself a wise man that is quick in resenting affronts, that stands upon every nicety of honour and right, and will not abate an ace of either; that prescribes, and imposes, and gives law to every body; but he that thus meddles is a fool, and creates a great deal of needless vexation to himself.

2. Men think when they are engaged in quarrels it would be a shame to them to go back, and let fall the weapon; whereas really *it is an honour for a man to cease from strife*, an honour to withdraw an action, to drop a controversy, to forgive an injury, and to be friends with those that we have fallen out with. It is the honour of a man, a wife man, a man of spirit, to shew the command he has of himself by *ceasing from strife*, yielding, and stooping, and receding from his just demands for peace-sake, as Abraham, the better man, *Gen. xiii. 8.*

4. The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.

See here the evil of slothfulness, and the love of ease.

1. It keeps men from the most necessary business, from plowing and sowing when the season is. *The sluggard* has ground to occupy, and has ability for it, he can *plow*, but he *will not*, some excuse or other he has to shift it off, but the true reason is, it is *cold* weather; though plowing time is not in the depth of winter, it is in the borders of winter, when he thinks it too *cold* for him to be abroad. Those are scandalously sluggish, that in the way of their business cannot find in their hearts to undergo so little toil as that of plowing, and so little hardship as that of a cold blast. Thus careless are many in the affairs of their souls; a trifling difficulty will frighten them from the most important duty: But good soldiers must endure hardness.

2. Thereby it deprives them of the most necessary supports. They that *will not plow* at seed time, cannot expect to reap at harvest; and therefore they must beg their bread with astonishment, when the diligent are bringing home their sheaves with joy. He that will not submit to the labour of plowing, must submit to the shame of begging; they *shall beg in harvest*, and yet *have nothing*; no, not then when there is most plenty. Though it may be charity to relieve sluggards, yet a man may in justice not relieve them, they deserve to be left to starve. They that would not provide oil in their vessels, begged when the bridegroom came, and were denied.

5. Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out.

A man's wisdom is here said to be of use to him, for the pumping of other people, and diving into them.

1. To get the knowledge of them. Though mens counsels and designs are never so carefully concealed by them, so that they are as *deep water*, which one cannot fathom; yet there are those that by fly insinuations, and questions that seem foreign, will get it out of them, both what they have done, and what they intend to do. Those therefore who would keep counsel, must not only put on resolution, but stand upon their guard.

2. To get knowledge by them. Some are very able and fit to give counsel, have an excellent faculty of cleaving a hair, and hitting the joint of a difficulty, and advising pertinently; but they are modest and reserved, and not communicative; they have a great deal in them, but it is loth to come out; in such a case, *a man of understanding will draw it out*, as wine out of a vessel. We lose the benefit we might have by the converse of wise men for want of the art of being inquisitive.

6. Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?

Note, 1. It is easy to find those that will pretend to be kind and liberal: There is many a man that will call himself a man of mercy, will brag what good he has done, and what good he designs to do, or at least what an affection he hath to well doing; most men will talk a great deal of their charity, generosity, hospitality, and piety, will sound a trumpet to themselves, as the Pharisees, and what little goodness they have will proclaim it, and make a mighty matter of it.

2. But it is hard to find those that really are kind and liberal; that have done, and will do more than either they speak of, or care to hear spoken of; that will be a true friend in a strait; such a one as one may trust to is like a black swan.

7. The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him.

It is here observed to the honour of a good man,

1. That he doth well for himself; he has a certain rule, which with an even steady hand he governs himself by, he *walks in his integrity*, i. e. he keeps a good conscience, and he has the comfort of it, for *it is his rejoicing*. He is not liable to those uneasinesses, either in contriving what he shall do, or reflecting on what he has done, which they are liable to that walk in deceit.

2. That he doth well for his family; *his children are blessed after him*, and fare the better for his sake; God has mercy in store for the seed of the faithful.

8. A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment, scattereth away all evil with his eyes.

Here is, 1. The character of a good governor. He is *a king* that deserves to be called so, who *sits in the throne*, not as a throne of honour, to take his ease, and take state upon him, and oblige men to keep their distance, but as a *throne of judgment*, that he may do justice, right the injured, and punish the injurious; that makes his business his delight, and loves no pleasure comparable to it; that doth not devolve the whole care and trouble upon others, but takes cognizance of affairs himself, and sees with his own eyes as much as may be, *1 Kings x. 9.*

2. The happy effect of a good government. The presence of the prince goes far towards the putting of wickedness out of countenance; if he inspect his affairs himself, those that are employed under him will be kept in awe, and restrained from doing an ill thing. If great men be good men, and will use their power as they may and ought; what good may they do, and what evil may they prevent?

9. Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?

This question is not only a challenge to any man in the world to prove himself sinless, whatever he pretends, but a lamentation of the corruption of mankind, even that which remains in the best. Alas! *Who can say, I am sinless?* Observe,

1. Who the persons are that are excluded from these pretensions; all, one as well as another: Here, in this imperfect state, no person whatsoever can pretend to be without sin: Adam in innocence, and saints in heaven can say so, but none in this life. Those that think themselves as good as they should be, cannot; nay, and those that are really good, will not, dare not say this.

2. What the pretension is that is excluded. We cannot say, *we have made our hearts clean*, though we can say, through grace, we are cleaner than we have been, yet we cannot say that we are clean, and pure from all remainders of sin; or, that we are clean from the gross acts of sin, yet we cannot say that our hearts are clean; or, though we are washed and cleansed, yet we cannot say that we our selves made our own hearts clean, it was the work of the Spirit; or, though we are pure from the sins of many others, yet we cannot say, that we are *pure from our sin, the sin that easily besets us, the body of death* which Paul complained of, *Rom. vii. 24.*

10. Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the LORD.

See here, 1. The various arts of deceiving that men have; all which evils the *love of money* is the root of. In paying and receiving money, which was then commonly done by the scale, they had *divers weights*, an under-weight for what they paid, and over-weight for what they received; in delivering out and taking in goods, they had *divers measures*, a scanty measure to sell by, and a large measure to buy by. This was doing wrong with plot and contrivance, and under colour of doing right. Under these is included all manner of fraud and deceit in commerce and trade.

2. The displeasure of God against them, whether they be about the money or the goods, in the buyer, or in the seller, they are all *alike an abomination to the Lord*, he will not prosper the trade that is thus driven, nor bless what is thus got; he hates those that thus break the common faith, by which justice is maintained, and will be *the avenger of all such*.

11. Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure; and whether it be right.

The tree is known by its fruits, a man by *his doings*; even a young tree by its first fruits, *a child by his childish things, whether his work be clean only, appearing good, (the word is used, chap. xvi. 2.) or whether it be right, i. e. really good.* This intimates,

1. That children will discover themselves; one may soon see what their temper is, and which way their inclination leads them, according as their constitution is. Children have not learned the art of dissembling, and concealing their bent as grown people have.

2. That parents should observe their children, that they may discover their disposition and genius, and both manage them and dispose of them accordingly. Drive the nail that will go, and draw out that which goes amiss. *Wisdom is herein profitable to direct.*

12. The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them.

Note, 1. God is the God of nature, and all the powers and faculties of nature are derived from him, and depend upon him, and therefore are to be employed for him. It was he that *formed the eye*, and *planted the ear*, *Psal. xciv. 9.* and the structure of both is admirable; and it is he that preserves to us the use of both; to his providence we owe it that our eyes are seeing eyes, and our ears

ears hearing ears. Hearing and seeing are the learning senses, and we must particularly own God's goodness in them.

2. God is the God of grace; it is he that gives the ear that hears God's voice, the eye that sees his beauty, for it is he that opens the understanding.

13. Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread.

Note, 1. Those that indulge themselves in their ease may expect to want necessities, which should have been gotten by honest labour. Therefore though thou must sleep, nature requires it, yet *Love not sleep*, as those do that hate business. Love not sleep for its own sake, but only as it fits for further work. Love not much sleep, but rather grudge the time that is spent in it, and wish thou couldst live without it, that thou mightest always be employed in some good exercise. We must allow it to our bodies as men allow it to their servants, because they cannot help it, and otherwise they shall have no good of them. They that love sleep are likely to come to poverty, not only because they lose the time they spend in excess of sleep, but because they contract a listless, careless disposition, and are still half a sleep, never well awake.

2. Those that stir up themselves to their business, may expect to have conveniences. *Open thine eyes*, i. e. awake, and shake off sleep, see how far in the day it is, how thy work wants thee, and how busy others are about thee! And when thou art awake look up, look to thine hits, and do not let slip thine opportunities; apply thy mind close to thy business, and be in care about it. It is the easy condition of a great advantage, *open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread*; if thou dost not grow rich, yet thou shalt have enough, and that is as good as a feast.

14. *It is naught, it is naught*, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.

See here, 1. What arts men use to get a good bargain, and to buy cheap. They not only cheapen carelessly, as if they had no need, no mind of the commodity, when, perhaps, they cannot go without it, there may be prudence in that, but they vilify and run down that which yet they know to be of value; they cry, *It is naught, it is naught*, it had this and the other fault, or perhaps may have; it is not good of the sort; and it is quite too dear; they can have better and cheaper elsewhere; or have bought better and cheaper; this is the common way of dodging; and after all it may be, it is neither so nor so, and they themselves know the contrary; but the buyer has no other way of being even with the seller, who doth as extravagantly commend his goods, and justify the price he sets on them; and so there is a fault on both sides, whereas the bargain would be made every jot as well, if both buyer and seller would be modest, and speak as they think.

2. What pride and pleasure men take in a good bargain, when they have got it, though therein they contradict themselves, and own they dissembled when they were driving the bargain; when he has beaten down the seller, who was content to lower his price rather than lose a customer, as many poor tradesmen are forced to do, small profit is better than none; then he goes his way and boasts what good goods he has got at his own price; and takes it as an affront, and a reflection upon his judgment, if any body disparageth his bargain. Perhaps he knew the worth of the goods better than the seller himself did, and knows how to get a great deal by them. See how apt men are to be pleased with their gettings, and proud of their tricks; whereas a fraud and lie is what a man ought to be ashamed of, though he have gained never so much by it.

15. There is gold, and a multitude of rubies: but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.

The lips of knowledge, i. e. a good understanding to guide the lips, and a good elocution to diffuse the knowledge, are to be preferred far before gold, and pearl, and rubies; for,

1. They are more rare in themselves, more scarce and hard to be got. *There is gold* in many a man's pocket that has no grace in his heart. In Solomon's time there was plenty of gold, 1 Kings x. 21. and abundance of rubies; every body wore them, they were to be bought in every town; but wisdom is a rare thing, a precious jewel, few have it so as to do good with it, nor is it to be purchased of the merchants.

2. They are more enriching to us, and more adorning. They make us rich towards God, rich in good works, 1 Tim. ii. 9; 10. Most people are fond of gold, and a ruby or two will not serve, they must have a multitude of them, a cabinet of jewels, but he that has the lips of knowledge despiseth these, because he knows and possesseth better things.

16. Take his garment that is surety for a stranger: and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

Two sorts of persons are here spoken of that are ruining their

own estates, and will be beggars shortly, and therefore are not to be trusted without good security.

1. Those that will be bound for any body that will ask them, that entangle themselves in rash suretyship to oblige their idle companions, they will break at last, nay, they cannot hold out long; these waste by wholesale.

2. Those that are in league with ill women, that treat them, and court them, and keep company with them, they will be beggars in a little time, never give them credit without a good pawn. Strange women have strange ways of impoverishing men to enrich themselves.

17. Bread of deceit is sweet to a man: but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.

Note, 1. Sin may be pleasant in the commission; it is possible it may; *bread of deceit*, wealth gotten by fraud, by lying and oppression, may be *sweet to a man*, and the more sweet for its being ill gotten; such pleasure doth the carnal mind take in the success of its wicked projects; all the pleasures and profits of sin are *bread of deceit*, they are stolen, for they are forbidden fruit, and they will deceive men, for they are not what they promise. However, for a time they are *rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel*, and the sinner blesteth himself in them.

But, 2. It will be bitter in the reflection, afterwards the sinner's *mouth shall be filled with gravel*; when his conscience is awakened, when he sees himself cheated, and becomes apprehensive of the wrath of God against him for his sin, how painful and uneasy then is the thought of it! The pleasures of sin are but for a season, and are succeeded with sorrows. Some nations have punished malefactors by mingling gravel with their bread.

18. Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war.

Note, 1. It is good in every thing to act with deliberation, and to consult with ourselves at least, and, in matters of moment, with our friends too, before we determine, but especially to ask counsel of God, and beg direction from him, and observe the conduct of his eye. This is the way to have both our minds and our purposes established, and to succeed well in our affairs; whereas what is done hastily and with precipitation, is repented of at leisure. Take time and you will have done the sooner. *Deliberandum est diu, quod statuendum est semel*.

2. It is especially our wisdom to be cautious in making war; consider and take advice, whether the war should be begun, or no, whether it be just, whether it be prudent, whether we be a match for the enemy, and able to carry it on, when it is too late to retreat, Luke xiv. 31. And when it is begun, how, and by what arts it may be prosecuted, for skill is as necessary as courage. Going to law is a kind of going to war, and therefore must be done with good advice, Prov. xxv. 8. The rule among the Romans was, *nec sequi bellum, nec fugere*.

19. He that goeth about as a tale-bearer, revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.

Two sorts of people are dangerous to be conversed with,

1. Tale-bearers, though they be commonly flatterers, and, by speaking fair, insinuate themselves into mens acquaintance. Those are ill people that go about carrying stories, that make mischief among neighbours and relations; to sow jealousies in the minds of people of their governours, of their ministers, and of one another; that reveal secrets which they are intrusted with, or which by unfair means they come to the knowledge of; or under pretence of guessing at mens thoughts and intentions, tell that of them which is really false. Be not familiar with such, do not give them the hearing when they tell their tales and reveal secrets; for you may be sure they will betray your secrets too, and tell tales of you.

2. Flatterers, for they are commonly tale-bearers. If a man fawn upon you, compliment and commend you, suspect him to have some design upon you, and stand upon your guard, he would pick that out of you which will serve him to make a story of to some body else to your prejudice; therefore *meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips*. Those too dearly love, and too dearly buy, their own praise, that will put a confidence in a man, and trust him with a secret or business because he speaks them fair.

20. Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.

Here is, 1. An undutiful child become very wicked by degrees; he began with despising his father and mother, slighting their instructions, disobeying their commands, and raging at their rebukes, but at length he arrives at such a pitch of impudence and impiety as to curse them, to give them scurrilous and opprobrious language, and to wish mischief to them who were the instruments of his be-
ing,

ing, and have taken so much care and pains about him; and this in defiance of God and his law, which has made this a capital crime, *Exod. xxi. 17. Matt. xv. 4.* and in violation of all the bonds of duty, natural affection, and gratitude.

2. An undutiful child become very miserable at last; *his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness*; all his honour shall be laid in the dust, and he shall for ever lose his reputation; let him never expect any peace or comfort in his own mind, no nor to prosper in this world. His days shall be shortened, and the lamp of his life extinguished, according to the reverse of the promise in the fifth commandment. His family shall be cut off, and his posterity be a curse to him; and it will be his eternal ruin, the lamp of his happiness shall be put out in the blackness of darkness, so the word is, even that which is for ever, *Jude 13. Matt. xxii. 13.*

21. An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning: but the end thereof shall not be blessed.

Note, 1. It is possible that an estate may be suddenly raised. Those that will be rich, by right or wrong, that make no conscience of what they say or do, if they can but get money by it, that, when it is in their power, will cheat their own father; and what they get they sordidly spare and hoard up, that grudge themselves and their families food convenient, and think all lost but what they buy land with, or put out to interest. By such ways as these a man may grow rich, may grow very rich in a little time, at his first setting out.

2. An estate that is suddenly raised, is many times as suddenly ruined, it was raised hastily, but not being raised honestly, it proves soon ripe and soon rotten, the end thereof shall not be blessed of God; and if he do not bless it, it can neither be comfortable, or of any continuance; so that he that got it at the end will be a fool. He had better have taken time and built firm.

22. Say not thou, I will recompence evil: but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.

They that live in this world must expect to have injuries done them, affronts given them, and trouble wrongfully created them, for we dwell among briars. Now here we are told what to do when we have wrong done us;

1. We must not revenge ourselves, no nor so much as think of it, or design it. Say not thou, no not in thy heart, *I will recompence evil* for evil, do not please thy self with the thought that some time or other thou shalt have an opportunity of being quits with him. Do not wish revenge, or hope for it, much less resolve upon it, no, not when the injury is fresh, and the resentments of it most deep. Never say I will do a thing which thou canst not in faith pray to God to assist thee in; and that thou canst not do in meditating revenge.

2. We must refer ourselves to God, and leave it to him to plead our cause, to maintain our right, and reckon with those that do us wrong in such a way and manner as he thinks fit, and in his own due time. Wait on the Lord, attend his pleasure, acquiesce in his will, and he doth not say he shall punish him that has injured thee, instead of desiring that, thou must forgive him and pray for him, but *he shall save thee*, and that is enough: He will protect thee, so that thy passing by one injury shall not (as is commonly feared) expose thee to another; nay, he will recompense good to thee to balance thy trouble, and encourage thy patience, as David hoped when Shimei cursed him, *2 Sam. xvi. 12.*

23. Divers weights are an abomination unto the LORD: and a false balance is not good.

This is to the same purpose with what was said, *ver. 10.*

1. It is here repeated, because it is a sin that God doubly hates; as lying (which is of the same nature with this sin) is mentioned twice among the seven things that God hates, *Prov. vi. 17, 19.* And because probably it was a sin very much practised at that time in Israel, and therefore made light of as if there were no harm in it, under pretence that being commonly used, there was no trading without it.

2. It is here added, *a false balance is not good*, to intimate that it is not only abominable to God, but unprofitable to the sinner himself, there is really no good to be got by it, no, not a good bargain, for a good bargain made by fraud will prove a losing bargain in the end.

24. Mans goings are of the LORD, how can a man then understand his own way?

We are here taught that in all our affairs,

1. We have a necessary and constant dependence upon God; all our natural actions depend upon his providence, all our spiritual actions upon his grace. The best man is no better than God makes him; and every creature is that to us, that it is the will of God it should be. Our enterprizes succeed not as we desire and design, but as God directs and disposes. The goings even of a

strong man, so the word signifies, *are of the Lord*, for his strength is weakness without God, nor is the battle always to the strong.

2. We have no foresight of future events, and therefore know not how to forecast for them. *How can a man understand his own way?* How can he tell what will befall him, since God's counsels concerning him are secret; and therefore how can he of himself contrive what to do without divine direction? We so little understand our own way, that we know not what is good for ourselves, and therefore we must make a virtue of necessity, and commit our way unto the Lord, in whose hand it is, follow the conduct, and submit to the dispose of providence.

25. It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy: and after vows to make enquiry.

Two things by which God is greatly affronted, men are here said to be ensnared by, and entangled not only in guilt, but in trouble and ruin at length.

1. Sacrilege; mens alienating holy things, and converting them to their own use, which is here called devouring them. What is devoted any way to the service and honour of God, for the support of religion and divine worship, or the relief of the poor, ought to be conscientiously preserved to the purposes designed, and those that directly or indirectly imbezzle them, or defeat the purpose for which they were given, will have a great deal to answer for; *Will a man rob God in tithes and offerings?* *Mal. iii. 8.* Those that hurry over religious offices, their praying and preaching, and huddle them up in haste, as being impatient to get done, may be said to devour that which is holy.

2. Covenant-breaking. It is a snare to a man after he has made vows to God to enquire how he may evade them, or get them dispensed with, and to contrive excuses for the violating of them. If the matter of them was doubtful, and the expressions ambiguous, that was his fault, he should have made them with more caution and consideration, for it will involve his conscience (if it be tender) in great perplexities; if he be to enquire concerning them afterwards, see *Ecc. v. 6.* for when we have opened our mouth to the Lord, it is too late to think of going back, *Acts v. 4.*

26. A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them.

See here, 1. What is the business of magistrates, they are to be a terror to evil doers. They must scatter the wicked, that are linked in confederacies to assist and embolden one another in doing mischief; and there is no doing this but by bringing the wheel over them, i. e. putting the laws in execution against them, crushing their power, and quashing their projects. Severity must sometimes be used to rid the country of those that are openly vicious and mischievous, debauched and debauching.

2. What is the qualification of magistrates, which is necessary in order to this; they have need to be both pious and prudent, for it is the wise king, that is both religious and discreet, that is likely to effect the suppression of vice and reformation of manners.

27. The spirit of a man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.

We have here the dignity of the soul, the great soul of man, that light which lighteth every man.

1. It is a divine light. It is the candle of the Lord; a candle of his lighting, for it is the inspiration of the Almighty that gives us understanding. He formeth the spirit of man within him. It is after the image of God that man is created in knowledge. Conscience, that noble faculty is God's deputy in the soul; it is a candle not only lighted by him, but lighted for him. The Father of spirits is therefore called the Father of lights.

2. It is a discovering light. By the help of reason we come to know men, to judge of their characters, and dive into their designs; by the help of conscience we come to know ourselves. The spirit of a man has a self consciousness; *1 Cor. ii. 11.* it searches into the dispositions and affections of the soul, praiseth what is good, condemns what is otherwise, and judgeth of the thoughts and intents of the heart. This is the office, this the power of conscience, which we are therefore concerned to get rightly informed, and keep void of offence.

28. Mercy and truth preserve the king: and his throne is upholden by mercy.

Here is, 1. The virtues of a good king: Those are mercy and truth, especially mercy, for that is mentioned twice here. He must be strictly faithful to his word, must be sincere, and abhor all dissimulation, must religiously discharge all the trusts reposed in him, must support and countenance truth. He must likewise rule with clemency, and by all acts of compassion gain the affections of his people. Mercy and truth are the glories of God's throne, and kings are called gods.

2. The advantages he gains thereby. These virtues will preserve his person, and support his government, will make him easy and safe,

safe, beloved by his own people, and feared by his enemies, if it be possible he should have any.

29. The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the gray head.

This shews that both young and old have their advantages; and therefore must each of them be according to their capacities serviceable to the publick, and neither of them despise or envy the other.

1. Let not old people despise the young, for they are strong and fit for action, able to go through business, and break through difficulties, which the aged and weak cannot grapple with. The glory of young men is their strength, provided they use it well, in the service of God and their country, not of their lusts; and that they be not proud of it, nor trust to it.

2. Let not young people despise the old, for they are grave, and fit for counsel, and though they have not the strength that young men have, yet they have more wisdom and experience. *Juniores ad labores, seniores ad honores.* God has put honour upon the old man; for his grey head is his beauty. See *Dan. vii. 9.*

30. The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the belly.

Note, 1. Many need severe rebukes. Some children are so obstinate, that their parents can do no good on them without sharp correction; some criminals must feel the rigour of the law, and publick justice; gentle methods will not work upon them; they must be beaten black and blue. And the wise God sees that his own children sometimes need very sharp afflictions.

2. Severe rebukes sometimes do a great deal of good, as corrosives contribute to the cure of a wound, eating out the proud flesh. The rod drives out even that foolishness which was bound up in the heart, and cleanseth away the evil there.

3. Oftentimes those that most need severe rebukes can worst bear them. Such is the corruption of nature, that men are as loth to be rebuked sharply for their sins, as to be beaten till their bones ache. *Correction is grievous to him that forsaketh the way,* and yet it is good for him, *Heb. xii. 11.*

C H A P. XXI.

1. **T**HE king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whither-soever he will.

Note, 1. Even the hearts of men are in God's hand, and not only their goings, as he had said, *chap. xx. 24.* God can change mens minds, can, by a powerful, insensible operation upon their spirits, turn them from that which they seemed most intent upon, and incline them to that which they seemed most averse to, as the husbandman by canals and gutters, turns the water through his grounds as he pleases; which doth not alter the nature of the water, or put any force upon it, no more than God's providence doth upon the native freedom of man's will, but direct the course of it to serve his own purpose.

2. Even kings hearts are so, notwithstanding their powers and prerogatives, as much as the hearts of common persons. The hearts of kings are unsearchable to us, much more unmanageable by us, as they have their *Arcana imperii*, so they have the prerogatives of their crown, but the great God has them not only under his eye, but in his hand. Kings are what he makes them. Those that are most absolute are under God's government: He puts things into their hearts, *Rev. xvii. 17. Ezra vii. 27.*

2. Every way of man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.

Note, 1. We are all apt to be partial in judging of our selves and our own actions, and to think too favourably of our own character, as if there were nothing amiss in it: *Every way of a man, even his by-way, is right in his own eyes;* the proud heart is very ingenious in putting a fair face upon a foul matter; and in making that appear right to it self which is far from being so, to stop the mouth of conscience.

2. We are sure that the judgment of God concerning us is according to truth. Whatever our judgment is concerning our selves the Lord pondereth the heart: God looks at the heart, and judgeth of men according to that, of their actions according to their principles and intentions; and his judgment of that is as exact as ours is of that which we ponder most, and more so: He weighs it in an unerring balance, *chap. xvi. 2.*

3. To do justice and judgment, is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

Here, 1. It is implied, that many deceive themselves with a conceit, that if they offer sacrifice that will excuse them from doing
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justice, and procure them a dispensation for their unrighteousness; and this makes their way seem right, *ver. 2. We have fasted, Isa. lviii. 3. I have peace-offerings with me, Prov. vii. 14.*

2. It is plainly declared, that living a good life, doing justly, and loving mercy is more pleasing to God than the most pompous and expensive instances of devotion; sacrifices were of divine institution, and were then acceptable to God if they were offered in faith, and with repentance, otherwise not, *Isa. i. 11, &c.* But then moral duties were preferred before them, *1 Sam. xv. 22.* which intimates that their excellency was not innate, nor the obligation to them perpetual, *Mic. vi. 6, 7, 8.* Much of religion lies in doing judgment and justice from a principle of duty to God, contempt of the world, and love to our neighbour, and this is more pleasing to God than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices, *Mark xii. 33.*

4. An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked is sin.

This may be taken as shewing us,

1. The marks of a wicked man. He that has a high look and a proud heart, that carries himself insolently and scornfully both towards God and man, and that is always plowing and plotting, designing and devising some mischief or other, he is indeed a wicked man. *The light of the wicked is sin. Sin is the pride, the ambition, the glory and joy, and the business of wicked men.*

2. The miseries of a wicked man. His raised expectations, his high designs, and most elaborate contrivances and projects are sin to him; he contracts guilt in them, and so prepares trouble for himself. The very business and employment of all wicked men, as well as their pleasure, is nothing but sin. So bishop Patrick. They do all to serve their lusts, and have no regard to the glory of God in it, and therefore their plowing is sin; and, no marvel, when their sacrifices is so, *Prov. xv. 8.*

5. The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness: but of every one that is hasty only to want.

Here is, 1. The way to be rich. If we would live plentifully and comfortably in the world we must be diligent in our business, and not stick at the toil and trouble of it, but prosecute it closely improving all advantages and opportunities for it, and doing what we do with all our might; yet we must not be hasty in it, nor hurry ourselves and others with it, but keep doing fair and softly, which, we say, goes far in a day. And with diligence there must be contrivance; the thoughts of the diligent are as necessary as the hand of the diligent. Forecast is as good as work. Seekest thou a man thus prudent and diligent, and he will have enough to live on.

2. The way to be poor. Those that are hasty, that are rash and inconsiderate in their affairs, and will not take time to think, that are greedy of gain by right or wrong, and make haste to be rich by unjust practices, or unwise projects, they are in the ready road to poverty. Their thoughts and contrivances, by which they hope to raise themselves, will ruin them.

6. The getting of treasures by a lying tongue, is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.

This shews the folly of those that hope to enrich themselves by dishonest practices, by oppressing and over-reaching those with whom they deal, by false witness-bearing, or by fraudulent contracts, of those that make no conscience of a lie when there is any thing to be got by it. They may perhaps heap up treasures by these means, that which they make their treasure; but,

1. They will not meet with the satisfaction they expect; it is a vanity tossed to and fro; it will be disappointment and vexation of spirit to them; they will not have the comfort of it, nor can they put any confidence in it, but will be perpetually uneasy. It will be tossed to and fro by their own consciences, and by the censures of men; let them expect to be in a constant hurry.

2. They will meet with the destruction they do not expect. While they are seeking wealth by such unlawful practices, they are really seeking death, they lay themselves open to the envy and ill will of men by the treasures they get, and to the wrath and curse of God, by the lying tongue, wherewith they get them, which he will make to fall upon themselves and sink them to hell.

7. The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; because they refuse to do judgment.

See here, 1. The nature of injustice. Getting money by lying (*ver. 6.*) is no better than downright robbery. Cheating is stealing; you had as good pick a man's pocket, as impose upon him by a lie, in making a bargain which he had no fence against but by not believing you, and it will be no excuse from the guilt of robbery to say he might chuse whether he would believe you, for that is a debt we should owe to all men.

2. The cause of injustice. Men refuse to do judgment, they will not render to all their due, but withhold it, and omissions make
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way for commissions, they come at length to robbery it self. They that refuse to do justice will chuse to do wrong.

3. The effect of injustice. It will return upon the sinner's own head. The robbery of the wicked will *terrify them*, so some, their consciences will be filled with horror and amazement; will cut them, will *saw them asunder*, so others, it will *destroy them* here and for ever, therefore he had said, (*ver 6.*) they *seek death*.

8. The way of man is froward and strange: but as for the pure, his work is right.

This shews that as men are, so is their way.

1. Ill men have ill ways. If the man be froward, his way also is strange; and this is the way of the most of men, such is the general corruption of mankind. *They are all gone aside*, Psal. xiv. 2, 3. all flesh has perverted their way. But the froward man the man of deceit, that acts by craft and trick in all he doth, his way is strange, contrary to all the rules of honour and honesty; it is strange, for you know not where to find him, or when you have him; it is strange, for it is alienated from all good, and estrangeth men from God and his favour. It is what he beholds afar off, and so do all honest men.

2. Men that are pure, their work shews them to be so, for it is right, it is just and regular; and they are accepted of God, and approved of men. The way of mankind in their apostasy is froward and strange, but as for the pure, those that by the grace of God are recovered out of the state, of which there is here and there one, *their work is right*, as Noah's was in the old world, Gen. vii. 1.

9. It is better to dwell in a corner of the house-top, than with a brawling woman in a wide house.

See here, 1. What a great affliction it is to a man to have a brawling, scolding woman to his wife; that upon every occasion, and if so, many times upon no occasion breaks out into passion, and chides either him or those about her, is fretful to herself, and furious to her children and servants, and in both vexatious to her husband. If a man has a wide house, spacious and pompous, this will embitter the comfort of it to him; *a house of society*, so the word is, in which a man may be sociable and entertain his friends, this will make both him and his house unsociable, and unfit for the enjoyments of true friendship. It makes a man ashamed of his choice and his management, and disturbs company.

2. What many a man is forced to do under such an affliction. He cannot keep up his authority; he finds it to no purpose to contradict the most unreasonable passion, for it is unruly, and rages so much the more; and his wisdom and grace will not suffer him to render railing for railing, nor his conjugal affection to use any severity, and therefore he finds it his best way to retire into a corner of the house-top, and sit alone there, out of the hearing of her clamour; and if he employ himself well there, as he may do, it is the wisest course he can take. Better do so, than quit the house and go into bad company for diversion, as many, who, like Adam, make their wife's sin the excuse of their own.

10. The foul of the wicked desireth evil: his neighbour findeth no favour in his eyes.

See here the character of a very wicked man.

1. The strong inclination he hath to do mischief. His very *soul desireth evil*, desires that evil may be done, and that he may have the pleasure not only of seeing it, but of having a hand in it; the root of wickedness lies in the soul, the desire that men have to do evil, that is the lust which conceives, and brings forth sin.

2. The strong aversion he has to do good. *His neighbour*, his friend, his nearest relation *finds no favour in his eyes*, cannot gain from him the least kindness, though he be in the greatest need of it. And when he is in the pursuit of the evil his heart is so much upon, he will spare no man that stands in his way; his next neighbour shall be used no better than a stranger, than an enemy.

11. When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise: and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge.

This we had before, chap. xix. 25. and it shews, there are two ways by which the simple may be made wise.

1. By the punishments that are inflicted on those that are incorrigibly wicked. Let the law be executed upon a scorner, and even he that is simple will be awakened and alarmed by it, and will discern more than he did the evil of sin, and will take warning by it, and take heed.

2. By the instructions that are given to those that are wise and willing to be taught. *When the wise is instructed*, by the preaching of the word, *he*, i. e. not only the wise himself, but the simple that stands by, *receiveth knowledge*. It is no injustice at all to take a good lesson to our selves which was designed for another.

12. The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked: but God overthroweth the wicked for their wickedness.

1. As we read this verse, it shews the reason why good men, when they come to understand things right, will not envy the prosperity of evil doers. When they see *the house of the wicked*, how full it is, perhaps, of all the good things of this life, they are tempted to envy; but when they *wisely consider* it, when they look upon it with an eye of faith, they see *God overthrowing the wicked for their wickedness*, that there is a curse upon their habitation, which will certainly be the ruin of it ere long, they see more reason to despise them, or pity them, than to fear or envy them.

2. Some give another sense of it: *The righteous man*, i. e. the judge or magistrate, that is intrusted with the execution of justice, and the conservation of the publick peace, *examines the house of the wicked*, searcheth it for arms, or for stolen goods, makes a diligent enquiry concerning his family, and the characters of those about him, that he may by his power *overthrow the wicked for their wickedness*, and prevent their doing any further mischief; that he may fire the nests where the birds of prey are harboured, or the unclean birds.

13. Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.

Here is the description and doom of an uncharitable man.

1. His description. He *stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor*, at the cry of their wants and miseries, he resolves to take no cognizance of them; at the cry of their requests and supplications, he resolves he will not so much as give them the hearing, turns them away from his door, and forbids them to come near him; or, if he cannot avoid hearing them, he will not heed them, nor be moved by their complaints, nor be prevailed with by their importunities; he *shuts up the bowels of his compassion*, and that is equivalent to the stopping of his ears, Acts vii. 57.

2. His doom: He shall himself be reduced to straits, which will make him cry, and then *he shall not be heard*. Men will not hear him, but reward him as he has rewarded others: God will not hear him; for he that *shewed no mercy*, shall have judgment *without mercy*, James ii. 13. and he that on earth denied a crumb of bread, in hell was denied a drop of water. God will be deaf to their prayers that are deaf to the poor's cries, which, if they be not heard by us, will be heard against us, Exod. xxii. 23.

14. A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom, strong wrath.

Here is, 1. The power that is commonly found to be in gifts: Nothing more violent than *anger*; O the force of *strong wrath*! and yet a handsome present, prudently managed, will turn away some mens wrath when it seemed implacable, and discharge the keenest and most passionate resentments: Covetousness is commonly a master-sin, and has the command of other lusts. *Pecunie obediunt omnia*. Thus Jacob pacified Esau, and Abigail David.

2. The policy that is commonly used in giving and receiving bribes; it must be *a gift in secret, and a reward in the bosom*; for he that takes it would not be thought to covet it, nor known to receive it, nor would he willingly be beholden to him whom he has been offended at; but if it be done privately all is well. No man should be too open in giving any gift, nor brag of the presents he sends; but if it be a bribe to pervert justice, that is so scandalous, that those who are fond of it are ashamed of it.

15. It is joy to the just to do judgment: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity.

Note, 1. It is a pleasure and satisfaction to good men, both to see justice administered by the government they live under, right taking place, and iniquity suppressed, and also to practise it themselves, according as their sphere is: They not only do justice, but do it with pleasure; not only for fear of shame, but for love of virtue.

2. It is a terror to wicked men to see the laws put in execution against vice and profaneness; it is destruction to them; as it is also a vexation to them to be forced, either for the support of their credit, or for fear of punishment, to do judgment themselves. Or, if we take it as we read it, the meaning is; there is true pleasure in the practice of religion, but certain destruction at the end of all vicious courses.

16. The man that wandreth out of the way of understanding, shall remain in the congregation of the dead.

Here is, 1. The sinner upon his ramble; he *wanders out of the way of understanding*, and when once he hath left that good way he wanders endlessly. The way of religion is *the way of understanding*; those that are not truly pious are not truly intelligent; those that *wander out of this way*, break the hedge which God hath set, and follow the conduct of the world and the flesh; and they go astray like lost sheep.

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2. The sinner at his rest, or rather, his ruin: He *shall remain* (*quiescet*, but not in *pace*) in the congregation of the giants, the sinners of the old world, that were swept away by the deluge; to that destruction the damnation of sinners is compared, as sometimes to the destruction of Sodom, when they are said to have their portion in fire and brimstone. Or, in the congregation of the damned, that are under the power of the second death. There is a vast congregation of damned sinners, bound in bundles for the fire, and in that they shall remain, remain for ever, that are shut out from the congregation of the righteous. He that forsakes the way to heaven, if he return not to it, will certainly sink into the depths of hell.

17. He that loveth pleasure, *shall be a poor man*: he that loveth wine and oil, shall not be rich.

Here is an argument against a voluptuous, luxurious life, taken from the ruin it brings mens temporal interests to. Here is,

1. The description of an epicure. *He loves pleasure*. God allows us the use of the delights of sense soberly and temperately, of wine to make glad the heart, and put vigour into the spirits; and oil to make the face to shine, and beautify the countenance; but he that loves these, that sets his heart upon them, covets them earnestly, is solicitous to have all the delights of sense wound up to the height of pleasurable, is impatient of every thing that crosseth him in his pleasures, relisheth these as the best pleasures, and has his mouth by them put out of taste to spiritual delights, here is an epicure, 2 Tim. iii. 4.

2. The punishment of an epicure in this world. *He shall be a poor man*; for the lusts of sensuality are not maintained but at a great expence; and there are instances of those who want necessities, and live upon alms, that, when time was, could not live without dainties and varieties. Many a beau becomes a beggar.

18. The wicked *shall be a ransom for the righteous*; and the transgressor for the upright.

This intimates,

1. What should be done by the justice of men; *the wicked*, that are the troublers of a land, ought to be punished, for the preventing and turning away of those national judgments, which otherwise will be inflicted, and in which even the righteous are many times involved. Thus when Achan was stoned he was a ransom for the camp of righteous Israel; and the seven sons of Saul, when they were hanged, were a ransom for the kingdom of righteous David.

2. What is often done by the providence of God; *the righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked comes in his stead*, and so seems as if he were a ransom for him, chap. xi. 8. God will rather leave many wicked people to be cut off than abandon his own people. *I will give men for thee*, Isa. xliii. 3, 4.

19. It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman.

Note, 1. Unbridled passions embitter and spoil the comfort of all relations. A peevish, angry wife makes her husband's life uneasy, to whom she should be a comfort and a meet-help. Those cannot dwell in peace and happiness, that cannot dwell in peace and love: Even those that are one flesh, if they be not withal one spirit, have no joy of their union.

2. It is better to have no company than bad company. The wife of thy covenant is thy companion, and yet if she be peevish and provoking, it is better to dwell in a solitary wilderness, exposed to wind and weather, than in company with her. A man may better enjoy God and himself in a wilderness, than among quarrelsome relations and neighbours. See ver. 9.

20. There is a treasure to be desired, and oil in the dwelling of the wise: but a foolish man spendeth it up.

Note, 1. Those that are wise will encrease what they have, and live plentifully; their wisdom will teach them to proportion their expences to their income, and to lay up for hereafter; so that there is a treasure of things to be desired, and as much as need be desired, a good stock of all things convenient, laid up in season, and particularly of oil, one of the staple commodities of Canaan, Deut. viii. 8. this is in the habitation or cottage of the wise; and it is better have an old fashioned house, and have it well furnished, than a modish one, and keep a forry house in it. God blesteth the endeavours of the wise, and then their houses are replenished.

2. Those that are foolish will mispend what they have upon their lusts, and so bring the stock they had to nothing. Those manage themselves ill that are in haste to spend what they have, but not in care which way to get more. Foolish children spend up what their wise parents had laid up; one sinner destroys much good, as the prodigal son.

21. He that followeth after righteousness and mercy, findeth life, righteousness, and honour.

See here, 1. What it is to make religion our business; it is to follow after righteousness and mercy; not to content our selves with easy performances, but to do our duty with the utmost care and pains, as those that are pressing forwards, and in fear of coming short; we must both do justly, and love mercy, and proceed and persevere therein: And though we cannot attain to perfection, yet it will be a comfort to us if we aim at it, and follow after it.

2. What will be the advantage of doing so: Those that do follow after righteousness, they shall find righteousness, i. e. God will give them grace to do good, and they shall have the pleasure and comfort of it; they that make conscience of being just to others, shall be justly dealt with by others, and others shall be kind to them. The Jews followed after righteousness, and did not find it because they sought amiss, Rom. ix. 31. Otherwise, Seek and you shall find; and with it shall find both life and honour, everlasting life and honour, the crown of righteousness.

22. A wise man scaleth the city of the mighty, and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof.

Note, 1. Those that have power are apt to promise themselves great things from their power. The city of the mighty thinks it self impregnable, and therefore its strength is the confidence thereof, what it boasts of, and trusts in, bidding defiance to danger.

2. Those that have wisdom, though they are so modest as not to promise much, yet many times perform great things, even against those that are so confident of their strength by their wisdom. Good conduct will go far, even against great force; and a stratagem well managed may effectually scale the city of the mighty, and cast down the strength it had such a confidence in. A wise man will gain upon the affections of people, and conquer them by strength of reason, which is a more noble conquest than that by strength of arms. They that understand their interest, will willingly submit themselves to a wise and good man, and the strongest walls shall not hold out against him.

23. Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from troubles.

Note, 1. It is our great concern to keep our soul from straits, from being entangled in snares and perplexities, and disquieted with troubles, that we may preserve the possession and enjoyment of our selves, and our souls may be in frame for the service of God.

2. Those that would keep their souls must keep a watch before the door of their lips, must keep the mouth by temperance, that no forbidden fruit go into it, no stolen waters, that nothing be eaten or drunk to excess; they must keep the tongue also, that no forbidden word go out of the door of the lips, no corrupt communication. By a constant watchfulness over our words, we shall prevent abundance of mischiefs which an ungoverned tongue runs men into. Keep thy heart, and that will keep thy tongue from sin; keep thy tongue, and that will keep thy heart from trouble.

24. Proud and haughty scorner is his name, who dealeth in proud wrath.

See here the mischief of pride and haughtiness.

1. It exposeth men to sin, it makes them passionate, and kindles in them the fire of proud wrath; they are continually dealing in it, as if it were their trade to be angry, and they had nothing so much to do as to barter passions, and exchange bitter words. Most of the wrath that inflames the spirits and societies of men, is proud wrath. Men cannot bear the least slight, nor in any thing to be crossed or contradicted, but they are out of humour, nay, in a heat presently. It likewise makes them scornful when they are angry, very abusive with their tongues, insolent towards those above them, and imperious towards all about them; only by pride comes all this.

2. It exposeth men to shame; they get into an ill name by it, and every one calls them proud and haughty scorners, and therefore no body cares for having any thing to do with them. If men would but consult their reputation a little, and the credit of their profession, which suffers with it, they would not indulge their pride and passion as they do.

25. The desire of the slothful killeth him: for his hands refuse to labour. 26. He coveteth greedily all the day long: but the righteous giveth and spareth not.

Here is, 1. The miseries of the slothful, whose hands refuse to labour in an honest calling, by which they might get an honest livelihood; they are as fit for labour as other men, and business offers it self, to which they might lay their hands, and apply their minds, but they will not; herein they fondly think they do well for themselves; (see Prov. xxvi. 16.) Soul, take thine ease; but really they are enemies to themselves; for, besides that their slothfulness starves them, depriving them of their necessary supports, their desires at the same time stab them; though their hands refuse to labour, their hearts cease not to covet riches, and pleasures, and honours, which yet cannot be obtained without labour; their desires

desires are impetuous and insatiable, they *covet greedily all the day long*, and cry, Give, give; they expect every body should do for them, though they will do nothing for themselves, much less for any body else; now these *desires kill them*, they are a perpetual vexation to them, fret them to the death, and, perhaps, put them upon such dangerous courses for the satisfying of their craving lusts, as hasten them to an untimely end. Many that must have money with which to make provision for the flesh, and would not be at the pains to get it honestly, have turned highwaymen, and that has killed them. Those that are slothful in the affairs of their souls, and yet have desires towards that which would be the happiness of their souls, those *desires kill them*, will aggravate their condemnation, and be witnesses against them that they were convinced of the worth of spiritual blessings, but they refused to be at the pains that was necessary to the obtaining of them.

2. The honours of the honest and diligent. The righteous and industrious have their desires satisfied, and enjoy not only that satisfaction, but the further satisfaction of doing good to others; the slothful are always craving, and gaping to receive, *but the righteous are always full, and contriving to give; and it is more blessed to give than to receive*. They give, and spare not, give liberally, and upbraid not; they give a portion to seven, and also to eight, and do not spare for fear of wanting.

27. The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, *when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?*

Sacrifices were of divine institution, and, when they were offered in faith, and with repentance and reformation, God was greatly honoured by them, and well pleased in them; but they were often, not only unacceptable, but an *abomination* to God, and he declared so; which was an indication, both that they were not required for their own sakes, and that there were better things, and more effectual, in reserve, when sacrifice and offering should be done away. They were an *abomination*,

1. When they were brought by wicked men that did not, according to the true intent and meaning of sacrificing, repent of their sins, mortify their lusts, and amend their lives. Cain brought his offering: Even wicked men may be found in the external performances of religious worship; they could freely give God their beasts, their lips, their knees, who would not give him their hearts: The Pharisees gave alms: But when the person is an *abomination*, as every wicked man is to God, the performance cannot but be so; *even when he brings it diligently*; so some read the latter part of the verse. Though their offerings are continually before God, *Psalms* l. 8. yet they are an abomination to him.

2. *Much more when they were brought with wicked minds*, when their sacrifices were made, not only consistent with, but serviceable to their wickedness; as Absalom's vow, Jezebel's fast, and the Pharisees long prayers. When men make a shew of devotion, that they may the more easily and effectually compass some covetous or malicious design; when holiness is pretended, but some wickedness intended; then especially the performance is an abomination, *Isa.* lxvi. 5.

28. A false witness shall perish: but the man that heareth, speaketh constantly.

Here is, 1. The doom of a *false witness*: He that, for favour to one side, or malice to the other, gives in a false evidence, or makes an affidavit of that which he knows to be false, or at least doth not know to be true, if it be discovered, his reputation will be ruined; a man may tell a lie, perhaps, in his haste; but he that gives in a false testimony, doth it with deliberation and solemnity, and it cannot but be a presumptuous sin, and a forfeiture of a man's credit; but though it should not be discovered, he himself shall be ruined; the vengeance he imprecated upon himself, when he took the false oath, will come upon him.

2. The praise of him that is conscientious: He that heareth, i. e. obeyeth the command of God, which is to *speak every man truth with his neighbour*; that testifies nothing but what he hath heard, and know to be true; he *speaks constantly*, i. e. consistently with himself. He is always in the same story; he speaks in *finem*; people give credit to him, and hear him out; he speaks unto victory; he carries the cause, which the *false witness* shall lose: He speaks to eternity; what is true is true eternally. *The lip of truth is established for ever*.

29. A wicked man hardneth his face: but *as for the upright, he directeth his way*.

Here is, 1. The presumption and impudence of a wicked man: He *hardneth his face*, brazens it, that he may not blush; steels it, that he may not tremble when he commits the greatest crimes; he bids defiance to the terrors of the law, and the checks of his own conscience; the reproofs of the word, and the rebukes of providence; he will have his way, and nothing shall hinder him, *Isa.* lvii. 17.

2. The caution and circumspection of a good man; *as for the upright, he doth not ask, what would I do, what have I a mind to? and that I will have; but what should I do? what doth God require of me? what is duty? what is prudence? what is for edification? and so he doth not force his way, but direct his way, by a safe and certain rule*.

30. *There is no wisdom nor understanding, nor counsel against the LORD.* 31. *The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD.*

The designing, busy part of mankind, are here directed, in all their counsels and undertakings, to have their eye to God, and to believe,

1. That there can be no success against God, and therefore they must never act in opposition to him, in contempt of his commands, or in contradiction to his counsels. Though they think they have *wisdom*, and *understanding*, and *counsel*, the best politicks and politicians on their side, yet if it be *against the Lord*, it cannot prosper long, it shall not prevail at last. He that sits in heaven laughs at mens projects against him and his Anointed; and will carry his point in despite of them, *Psalms* ii. 1,—6. They that fight against God, are preparing shame and ruin for themselves; whoever *make war with the Lamb*, he will certainly *overcome them*, *Rev.* xvii. 14.

2. That there can be no success without God, and therefore they must never act but in dependence on him. Be the cause never so good, and the patrons of it never so strong, and wise, and faithful, and the means of carrying it on, and gaining the point, never so probable, still they must acknowledge God, and take him along with them. Means indeed are to be used, *the horse* must be *prepared against the day of battle*, and the foot too, they must be armed and disciplined; in Solomon's time even Israel's kings used horses in war, though they were forbidden to multiply them; *but*, after all, *safety and salvation is of the Lord*; he can save without armies, but armies cannot without him; and therefore he must be fought to, and trusted in for success, and when success is obtained, he must have all the glory. When we are preparing for *the day of battle*, our great concern must be to make God our friend, and secure his favour.

C H A P. XXII.

1. *A Good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.*

Here are two things which are more valuable, and which we should covet more than great riches.

1. To be well spoken of. *A name*, that is, a *good name*, a name for good things with God and good people, this is *rather to be chosen than great riches*; that is, we should be more careful to do that by which we may get and keep a good name, than that by which we may raise and increase a great estate. Great riches bring great cares with them, expose men to danger, and add no real value to a man. A fool and a knave may have *great riches*, but a *good name* makes a man easy and safe, supposes a man wise and honest, redounds to the glory of God, and gives a man a greater opportunity of doing good. By *great riches* we may relieve the bodily wants of others, but by a *good name* we may recommend religion to them.

2. To be well beloved; to have an interest in the esteem and affections of all about us; this is better *than silver and gold*: Christ had neither silver nor gold, but he *grew in favour with God and man*, *Luke* ii. 52. This should teach us to look with a holy contempt upon the wealth of this world, not to set our hearts upon that, but with all possible care to *think on those things that are lovely, and of good report*, *Phil.* iv. 8.

2. The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all.

Note, 1. Among the children of men divine providence hath so ordered it, that some are *rich* and others *poor*, and these are intermixed in societies; *the Lord is the maker of both*, i. e. both the author of their beings and the disposer of their lot. The greatest man in the world must acknowledge God to be his Maker, and is under the same obligations to be subject to him that the meanest are; and the poorest have the honour to be the work of God's hands as much as the greatest: *Have they not all one Father?* *Mal.* ii. 10. *Job* xxxi. 15. God make some rich that they may be charitable to the poor, and others poor that they may be serviceable to the rich; and they have need one of another, *1 Cor.* xii. 21. He makes some poor to exercise their patience, and contentment, and dependence upon God; and others rich to exercise their thankfulness and beneficence. Even *the poor we have always with us*, they shall never cease out of the land, nor the rich neither.

2. Notwithstanding the distance that is in many respects between *rich and poor*, yet in most things they *meet together*, especially before the Lord, who is the maker of them all, and regardeth not the rich more than the poor, Job xxxiv. 19. *Rich and poor meet together* at the bar of God's justice; all guilty before God, concluded under sin, and shapen in iniquity; the rich as much as the poor; and at the throne of God's grace; the poor are as welcome there as the rich: There is the same Christ; the same scripture, the same Spirit, the same covenant of promises for them both: There is the same heaven for poor saints that there is for rich; Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham; and the same hell for rich sinners that there is for poor; all stand upon the same level before God, as they do also in the grave: *The small and great are there*.

3. A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on and are punished.

See here, 1. The benefit of wisdom and consideration: *A prudent man*, by the help of his prudence, will foresee an evil before it comes, and hide himself; he will be aware when he is entering into a temptation, and will put on his armour, and stand on his guard; when the clouds are gathering for a trouble, he takes the warning and flies to the name of the Lord, as his strong tower. Noah foresaw the deluge, Joseph the years of famine, and provided accordingly.

2. The mischief of rashness and inconsideration; the simple that believe every word that flatters them, will believe none that warns them, and so they pass on and are punished, venture upon sin, though they are told what will be in the end thereof; throw themselves into trouble, notwithstanding the fair warning given them, and they repent their presumption when it is too late. See an instance of both these, Exod. ix. 20, 21. Nothing is so fatal to precious souls as this, they will not take warning.

4. By humility and the fear of the LORD, are riches, and honour, and life.

See here, 1. Wherein religion doth very much consist; in *humility, and the fear of the Lord*; that is, walking humbly with God; we must so reverence God's majesty and authority, as to submit with all humility to the commands of his word, and the disposals of his providence. We must have such low thoughts of our selves, as to carry it humbly towards God and man. Where the fear of God is, there will be humility.

2. What is to be gotten by it; *riches, and honour*, and comfort, and long life in this world, as far as God sees good; however, spiritual *riches and honour* in the favour of God, and the promises and privileges of the covenant of grace, and eternal life at last.

5. Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward: he that doth keep his soul shall be far from them.

Note, 1. The way of sin is vexatious and dangerous. *In the way of the froward*, that crooked way, which is contrary to the will and word of God, *thorns and snares* are in it: *Thorns* of grief for past sins, and *snares* entangling them in further sin. He that makes no conscience what he saith and doth, will find himself hampered by that imaginary liberty, and tormented by his pleasures. *Froward* people, that are soon angry, expose themselves to trouble at every step: Every thing will fret and vex him that will fret and vex at every thing.

2. The way of duty is safe and easy. *He that doth keep his soul*, that watcheth carefully over his own heart and ways, is far from those *thorns and snares*, for his way is both plain and pleasant.

6. Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Here is, 1. A great duty enjoined, particularly to those that are the parents and instructors of children, in order to the propagating of wisdom, that it may not die with them. *Train up children* in that age of vanity, to keep them from the sins and snares of it; in that learning age, to prepare them for what they are designed to. *Catechise* them, initiate them, keep them under discipline; *train* them as soldiers, who are taught to handle their arms, keep rank, and observe the word of command. *Train* them up, not in the way they would go, the bias of their corrupt hearts would draw them aside, but *in the way they should go*, the way, which if you love them you would have them go. *Train up a child according as he is capable*, so some take it; with a gentle hand, as nurses feed children, with a little and oft, Deut. vi. 7.

2. A good reason for it, taken from the great advantage of this care and pains with children; when they grow up, when they grow old, it is to be hoped they will not depart from it. Good impressions made upon them then will abide upon them all their days. Ordinarily the vessel retains the favour with which it was first seasoned. Many indeed have departed from the good way in which they were trained up; Solomon himself did; but it may be a means of their

recovering themselves, as it is supposed Solomon did: However, the parents will have the comfort of having done their duty, and used the means.

7. The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.

He had said, ver. 2. that *rich and poor meet together*, but here he finds, here he shews, that as to the things of this life there is a great difference; for,

1. Those that have little will be in subjection to those that have much, because they have dependence upon them, they have received, and expect to receive support from them. *The rich rule over the poor*, and too often more than becomes them, with pride and rigour, unlike to God, who, though he be great, yet despiseth not any. It is part of the affliction of the poor, that they must expect to be trampled upon; and part of their duty, to be serviceable, as far as they can, to those that are kind to them, and study to be grateful.

2. Those that are but going behind-hand find themselves to lie much at the mercy of those that are before-hand: *The borrower is servant to the lender*, is obliged to him, and must sometimes beg, *Have patience with me*. Therefore it is part of Israel's promised happiness, that they should lend, and not borrow, Deut. xxviii. 12. And it should be our endeavour to keep as much as may be out of debt: Some sell their liberty to gratify their luxury.

8. He that soweth iniquity, shall reap vanity: and the rod of his anger shall fail.

Note, 1. Ill got gains will not prosper. *He that sows iniquity*, that doth an unjust thing in hopes to get by it, he shall reap vanity; i. e. what he gets will never do him any good, nor give him any satisfaction: He will meet with nothing but disappointment. They that create trouble to others do but prepare trouble for themselves: Men shall reap as they sow.

2. Abused power will not last. If the rod of authority turn into a rod of anger; if men rule by passion instead of prudence; and, instead of the publick welfare, aim at nothing so much as the gratifying of their own resentments, it shall fail, and be broken, and their power shall not bear them out in their exorbitances, Isa. x. 24, 25.

9. He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed: for he giveth of his bread to the poor.

Here is, 1. The description of a charitable man; he has a *bountiful eye*, opposed to the evil eye, chap. xxiii. 6. and the same with the *single eye*, Matt. vi. 22. An eye that seeks out objects of charity, besides those that offer themselves; an eye, that, upon the sight of one in want and misery, affects the heart with compassion; an eye, that, with the alms, gives a pleasant look, which makes the alms doubly acceptable. He has also a liberal hand, *he gives of his bread* to those that need; *his bread*, the bread appointed for his own eating: He will rather abridge himself than see the poor perish for want; yet he doth not give all *his bread*, but *of his bread*; the poor shall have their share with his own family.

2. The blessedness of such a man, the loins of the poor will bless him, all about him will speak well of him, and God himself shall bless him, in answer to many a good prayer put up for him, and he shall be blessed.

10. Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease.

See here, 1. What the *scorner* doth; it is implied, that he sows discord, and makes mischief wherever he comes; much of the *strife and contention* which disturbs the peace of all societies is owing to the *evil interpreter*, as some read it, that construes every thing to the worst; to those that despise and deride every one that comes in their way, and take a pride in bantering and abusing all mankind.

2. What is to be done with the *scorner*, that will not be reclaimed; cast him out of your society, as Ishmael, when he mocked Isaac, was thrust out of Abraham's family. They that would secure the peace must seclude the *scorner*.

11. He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips, the king shall be his friend.

Here is, 1. The qualifications of an accomplished, a compleat gentleman, that is fit to be employed in publick business; he must be an honest man, a man that loves pureness of heart, and hates all impurity; not only pure from all fleshly lusts, but from all deceit and dissimulation, from all selfishness and sinister designs; that takes care to approve himself a man of sincerity, is just and fair from a principle, and delights in nothing more than in keeping his own conscience clean, and void of offence. He must also be able to speak handsomely, and with a good grace; not to dawb and flatter,

ter, but to deliver himself decently and ingeniously, in language as clean and smooth as his spirit.

2. The preferment such a man stands fair for; *the king*, if he be wise and good, and understand his own and his peoples interest, *shall be his friend*, shall make him of his cabinet council, as there was one in David's court, and another in Solomon's, that was called *the king's friend*; or, in any business he has, the king will befriend him. Some understand it of the King of kings; a man *in whose spirit there is no guile*, and whose speech is always with grace, God will be his friend, Messiah the prince will be his friend; *this honour have all the saints*.

12. The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge, and he overthroweth the words of the transgressor.

Here is, 1. The special care God takes to *preserve knowledge*, i. e. to keep up religion in the world, by keeping up among men the knowledge of himself, and of good and evil, notwithstanding the corruption of mankind, and the artifices of Satan to blind mens minds, and keep them in ignorance. It is a wonderful instance of the power and goodness of *the eyes of the Lord*, i. e. his watchful providence. Or, he preserveth *men of knowledge*, wise and good men, 2 Chron. xvi. 9. particularly faithful witnesses, that speak what they know, God protects such, and prospers their counsels. He doth by his grace *preserve knowledge* in such, doth secure his own work and interest in them. See Prov. ii. 7, 8.

2. The just vengeance God takes on those that speak and act against knowledge, against their own knowledge, and against the interests of knowledge and religion in the world: *He overthroweth the words of the transgressor*, and *preserveth knowledge* in spite of them: He defeats all the counsels and designs of false and treacherous men, and turns them to their own confusion.

13. The slothful man saith, *There is a lion without*, I shall be slain in the streets.

Note, 1. Those that have no mind to their business will never want excuses to shift it off. Multitudes are ruined both for soul and body by their slothfulness, and yet still they had something or other to say for themselves; so ingenious are men in putting a cheat upon their own souls! And who, I pray, will be the gainer at last, when the pretences will be all rejected as vain and frivolous?

2. Many frighten themselves from real duties by imaginary difficulties. *The slothful man* has work to do *without* in the fields, but he fancies *there is a lion* there; nay, he pretends he dares not go along the streets for fear some body or other should meet him and kill him: He doth not himself think so, only he *saith* so to those that call him up; he talks of *a lion without*, but considers not his real danger from the devil, that *roaring lion*, that is in bed with him, and from his own slothfulness which kills him.

14. The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the LORD, shall fall therein.

This is designed to warn all young men against the lusts of uncleanness, as they tender the welfare of their souls, let them take heed of *strange women*, lewd women, whom they ought to be strange to; of *the mouth of strange women*, of the kisses of their lips, Prov. vii. 13. of the words of their lips, their charms and enticements; dread them, have nothing to do with them; for,

1. Those who abandon themselves to that sin, it is a sign they are abandoned of God; it is *a deep pit*, which those fall into that are *abhorred of the Lord*, who leaves them to themselves to enter into that temptation, and takes off the bridle of his restraining grace to punish them for other sins. Value not thy self upon thy being in favour with such women, when it speaks thee under the wrath of God.

2. It is seldom that they recover themselves, for it is *a deep pit*, it will be hard getting out of it, it doth so besot the mind, and debauch the conscience, by pleasing the flesh.

15. Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

We have here two very sad considerations:

1. That corruption is woven into our nature. Sin is *foolishness*, it is contrary both to our right reason, and to our true interest; it is *in the heart*, there is an inward inclination to sin, to speak and act foolishly; it is *in the heart of children*, they bring it into the world with them, it is what they were shapen and conceived in; it is not only found there, but it is *bound* there, it is annexed to the heart; so some vicious dispositions cleave close to the soul, are bound to it, as the imp to the stock into which it is grafted, which quite alters the property; there is a knot tied between the soul and sin, a true lover's knot; they two become one flesh. It is true of our selves, it is true of our children, whom we have begot in our own likeness. O God, thou knowest this *foolishness*.

2. That *correction* is necessary to the cure of it: It will not be got out by fair means, and gentle methods, there must be strictness and severity, and that which will cause grief. Children need to be

corrected, and kept under discipline by their parents; and we all need to be corrected by our heavenly Father, Heb. xii. 6, 7. and under the correction we must stroke down folly, and kiss the rod.

16. He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want.

This shews what evil courses rich men sometimes take, by which, in the end, they will impoverish themselves, and provoke God, notwithstanding their abundance, to bring them to want; they *oppress the poor*, and *give to the rich*; i. e.

1. They will not in charity relieve the poor, but withhold from them, that, by saving that which is really the best, but which they think the most needless part of their expences, they may *increase their riches*; but they will make presents *to the rich*, and give them great entertainments, either in pride and vain-glory, that they may look great, or in policy, that they may receive it again with advantage; such *shall surely come to want*: Many have been beggared by a foolish generosity, but never any by a prudent charity. Christ bids us invite the poor, Luke xiv. 12, 13.

2. They not only will not relieve *the poor*, but they *oppress* them, rob the spittal, extort from their poor tenants and neighbours, invade their rights, who have not wherewithal to defend themselves, and then *give bribes to the rich* to protect and countenance them in it, but in vain, they *shall come to want*. They that rob God, and so make him their enemy, cannot secure themselves by *giving to the rich* to make them their friends.

17. Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wife, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge. 18. For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips. 19. That thy trust may be in the LORD, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee. 20. Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge? 21. That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?

Solomon here changeth his stile, and manner of speaking; hitherto, for the most part, since the beginning of chap. x. he had laid down doctrinal truths, and but now and then dropt a word of exhortation, leaving us to make the application as we went along; but here, to the end of chap. xxiv. he directs his speech to his son, his pupil, to his reader, his hearer, speaking as to a particular person: hitherto, for the most part, his sense was comprized in one verse, but here usually it is drawn out further. See how wisdom tries variety of methods with us, lest we should be cloyed with any one: To awaken attention, and to assist our application, we are addressed to. Ministers must not think it enough to preach before their hearers, but must preach to them; nor enough to preach to them all in general, but should apply themselves to particular persons, as here; Do thou do so and so. Here is,

1. An earnest exhortation to get wisdom and grace, by attending to *the words of the wife* men, both written and preached; the words of the prophets and priests; and particularly to that *knowledge* which Solomon in this book gives men of good and evil, sin and duty, rewards and punishments: To these *words*, to this *knowledge*, the ear must be *bowled down*, in humility, and serious attention; and the *heart applied* by faith and love, and close consideration. The ear will not serve without the heart.

2. Arguments to enforce this exhortation. Consider,

(1.) The worth and weight of the things themselves, which Solomon in this book gives us the *knowledge* of; they are not trivial things for amusement and diversion, not jocular proverbs, to be acted in sport, and to pass away time; no; they are *excellent things*, which concern the glory of God, the holiness and happiness of our souls, the welfare of mankind, and all communities; they are *princely things*, so the word is; fit for kings to speak, and senates to hear: They are things that concern *counsels and knowledge*, i. e. wise counsels, relating to the most important concerns; things which will not only make us knowing our selves, but enable us to advise others.

(2.) The clearness of the discovery of these things, and the directing of them to us in particular. They are *made known*, publickly known, that all may read; plainly known, that he that runs may read; *made known this day*, more fully than ever before, in this day of light and knowledge; *made known in this thy day*; but it is only a little while that this light is with you, perhaps, the things that are *this day made known to thee*, if thou improve not the day of thy visitation, may before to-morrow be *hid from thine eyes*. They are *written* for the greater *certainty*, and that they may be received, and the more safely be transmitted pure and entire to posterity; but that which the emphasis is here most laid upon, is, that they are *made known to thee, even to thee*, and *written to thee*, as if it were a letter directed to thee by name; it is suited to thee, and to thy case, thou mayest in this glass see thine own face;

face; it is intended for thee, to be a rule to thee, and by it thou must be judged; we cannot say of these things, they are good things, but they are nothing to us; no, they are of the greatest concern imaginable to us.

(3.) The agreeableness of these things to us, in respect both of comfort and credit. 1. If we hide them in our hearts they will be very pleasing, and yield us an abundant satisfaction, *ver. 18. It is a pleasant thing*, and will be thy constant entertainment, *if thou keep them within thee*; if thou digest them, and be acted and governed by them, and delivered into them as into a mould. The form of godliness, when that is rested in, is but a force put upon a man, and he doth but do penance in that white clothing; those only that submit to the power of godliness, and make heart-work of it, find the pleasure of it, *Prov. ii. 10.* 2. If we make use of them in our discourse, they will be very becoming, and gain us a good reputation; *they shall be fitted in thy lips*; speak of these things, and thou speakest like thyself, and as is fit for thee to speak considering thy character: Thou wilt also have pleasure in speaking of these things, as well as in thinking of them.

(4.) The advantage designed us by them. The *excellent things* which God hath written to us, are not like the commands which the master gives his servant, which are all intended for the benefit of the master, but like those which the master gives his scholar, which are all intended for the benefit of the scholar. These things must be kept by us, for they are *written to us*,

1. That we may have a confidence in God, and so may have comfort in him, and communion with him: *That thy trust may be in the Lord*, *ver. 19.* We cannot trust in God but in the way of duty, we are therefore taught our duty, that we may have reason to trust in God. Nay, this is it self one great duty we are to learn, and a duty that is the foundation of all practical religion, to live a life of delight in God, and dependence on him.

2. That we may have a satisfaction in our own judgment: *That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth*: That thou mayest know what is truth, mayest plainly distinguish between it and falsehood, and mayest know upon what grounds thou receivest and believest the truths of God. Note, 1. It is a desirable thing to know, not only *the words of truth*, but *the certainty of them*; that our faith may be intelligent and rational, and may grow up to a full assurance. 2. The way to *know the certainty of the words of truth*, is to make conscience of our duty; for *if any man do his will, he shall know* for certain that the doctrine is of God, *John vii. 17.*

3. That we may be useful and serviceable to others for their instruction: *That thou mayest give a good account of the words of truth to them that send to thee*, to consult thee as an oracle; or, as the margin reads it, *to those that send thee*, that employ thee as an agent or ambassador in any business. Knowledge is given us to do good with, that others may light their candle at our lamp, and that we may in our place serve our generation according to the will of God. And those who make conscience of keeping God's commandments, will be best able to *give a reason of the hope that is in them*.

22. Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate. 23. For the LORD will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.

After this solemn preface, one would have expected something new and surprizing; no; here is a plain and common, but very needful caution, against the barbarous and inhuman practice of oppressing poor people. Observe,

1. The sin it self, and that is *robbing the poor*, and making them poorer; taking from those that have but little to lose, and so leaving them nothing. It is bad to rob any man, but most absurd to rob the poor, whom we should relieve; to squeeze those with our power, whom we should water with our bounty; to oppress the afflicted, and so to add affliction to them; to give judgment against them, and so to patronize those that do rob them; which is as bad as if we robbed them our selves. Rich men will not suffer themselves to be wronged, poor men cannot help it, and therefore we ought to be the more careful not to wrong them.

2. The aggravations of the sin. (1.) If their inability, by reason of their poverty, to right themselves, embolden us to rob them, it is so much the worse; that is *robbing the poor, because he is poor*: This is not only a base and cowardly thing, to take advantage against a man because he is helpless; but it is unnatural, and speaks men worse than beasts. (2.) Or if it be done under colour of law and justice, that is oppressing *the afflicted in the gate*, where they ought to be protected from wrong, and to have justice done them against those that oppress them.

3. The danger that attends this sin. He that robs and oppresses the poor, it is at his peril; for, (1.) The oppressed will find God their powerful patron, he will *plead their cause*, and not suffer them to be run down and trampled upon. If men will not appear for them, God will. (2.) The oppressors will find him a just avenger; he will make reprisals upon them, will *spoil the souls of those that spoil them*; he will repay them in spiritual judgments,

in curses to their souls. He that robs the poor will be found in the end a murderer of himself.

24. Make no friendship with an angry man: and with a furious man thou shalt not go: 25. Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.

Here is, 1. A good caution against being intimate with a passionate man. It is the law of friendship that we accommodate our selves to our friends, and be ready to serve them, and therefore we ought to be wise and wary in the choice of a friend, that we come not under that sacred tie to any one whom it would be our folly to accommodate our selves to; though we must be civil to all, yet we must be careful who we lay in our bosoms, and contract a familiarity with. And, among others, a man that is easily provoked, touchy, and apt to resent affronts, that, when he is in a passion, cares not what he saith or doth, but grows outrageous, such a one is not fit to be made a friend or companion, for he will be ever and anon angry with us, and that will be our trouble, and will expect that we should like him be angry with others, and that will be our sin.

2. Good cause given for this caution, *lest thou learn his way*. Those we go with we are apt to grow like. Our corrupt hearts have so much tinder in them, that it is dangerous conversing with those that throw about the sparks of their passion; we shall thereby get a snare to our souls, a disposition to anger is a great snare to any man, and on occasion of much sin. He doth not say, lest thou have ill language given thee, or get a broken head, but which is much worse, lest thou imitate him, to humour him, and so contract an ill habit.

26. Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts. 27. If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away thy bed from under thee?

We have here, as often before, a caution against suretiship, as a thing both imprudent and unjust.

1. We must not associate our selves, nor contract an intimacy with men of broken fortunes, and reputations, that need, and will urge their friends to be bound for them, that they may cheat their neighbours to feed their lusts, and by keeping up a little longer, may do the more damage at last to those that give them credit. Having nothing to do with such, be not thou among them.

2. We must not cheat people of their money, by *striking hands* our selves, or *becoming surety for others*, when we have not to pay. If a man by the divine providence is disabled to pay his debts, he ought to be pitied and helped, but he that takes up money or goods himself, or is bound for another, when he knows he has not wherewithal to pay, or that which he has is so settled, that the creditor cannot come at it, he doth in effect pick his neighbour's pocket, and though in all cases compassion is to be used, yet he may thank himself if the law have its course, and his bed be taken from under him, which might not be taken for a pawn to secure a debt, *Exod. xxii. 26, 27.* For if a man appeared to be so poor that he had nothing else to give for security, he ought to be relieved, and it was honestly done to own it: But for the recovery of a debt, it seems it might be taken by the *summum jus*.

3. We must not ruin our own estates and families, every man ought to be just to himself, and to his wife and children; those are not so who live above what they have, who by the mismanagement of their own affairs, or by encumbering themselves with others debts, waste what they have, and bring themselves to poverty. We may take joyfully the *spoiling of our goods*, if it be for the testimony of a good conscience, but if it be for our own rashness and folly we cannot but take it heavily.

28. Remove not the ancient land-mark, which thy fathers have set.

1. We are here taught not to invade another man's right, though we can find ways of doing it never so secretly, and plausibly, clandestinely, and by fraud, without any open force. Let not property in general be entrenched upon, by robbing men of their liberties and privileges, or any just ways of maintaining them: Let not the property of particular persons be encroached upon, the land-marks, or meer-stones are standing witnesses to every man's right, let not those be removed quite away, for thence come wars, and fightings, and endless disputes; let them not be removed so as to take from thy neighbour's lot to thine own; for that is downright robbing him, and entailing of the fraud upon posterity.

2. We may infer from hence, that a deference is to be paid in all civil matters to ancient usages, time out of mind; and the settled constitutions of government, in which it becomes us to acquiesce; lest an attempt to change it, under pretence of changing it for the better, prove of dangerous consequence.

29. Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men.

Here is, 1. A plain intimation, what a hard thing it is to find a truly ingenious, industrious man. *Seest thou a man diligent in his business?* Thou wilt not see many such, so epidemical a distemper is dulness and slothfulness. He is here commended that lays out himself to get business, though it be but in a very low and narrow sphere, and is not easy when he is out of business, that loves business, is quick and active in it, and goes through it, not only with constancy and resolution, but with dexterity and expedition, a man of dispatch, that knows how to bring a deal of business into a little compass.

2. A moral prognostication of the preferment of such a man; though now he *stands before mean men*, is employed by them, and attends upon them, yet he will rise, and is likely enough to *stand before kings*, as an ambassador to foreign kings, or prime minister of state to his own. *Seest thou a man diligent in the business of religion?* he is likely to excel in virtue, and shall stand before the King of kings.

C H A P XXIII.

1. **W**HEN thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee. 2. And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. 3. Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat.

The sin we are here warned against, is luxury and sensuality, and the indulgence of the appetite in eating and drinking, a sin that most easily besets us.

1. We are here told when we enter into temptation, and are in most danger of falling into this sin. *When thou sittest to eat with a ruler* thou hast great plenty before thee, varieties and dainties, such a table spread as thou hast seldom seen; thou art ready to think, as Haman did, of nothing but the honour hereby done thee, *Esth. v. 12.* And the opportunity thou hast of pleasing thy palate, and forgettest that here is a snare laid for thee; and perhaps the temptation may be stronger, and more dangerous to one that is not used to such entertainments, than to one that always sits down to a good table.

2. We are here bid to double our guard at such a time. We must (1.) Apprehend ourselves to be in danger; *consider diligently what is before thee*, what meat and drink is before thee, that thou mayest chuse that which is safest for thee, and which thou art least likely to eat and drink of to excess. Consider, what company is before thee, the ruler himself, who if he be wise and good, will take it as an affront for any of his guests to disorder themselves at his table. And if when we sit to eat with a ruler, much more when we sit to eat with the Ruler of rulers at the Lord's table, must we *consider diligently what is before us*, that we may not in any respect *eat and drink unworthily*, unbecomingly, lest that table become a snare. (2.) We must frighten ourselves into temperance and moderation, *put a knife to thy throat*, i. e. restrain thyself as it were with a sword hanging over thy head from all excess. Let these words, *take heed lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and so that day come upon you at unawares*; or those, *for all these things God shall bring thee into judgment*; or those, *drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God*, be a knife to the throat. The Latins call *luxury gula*, the throat, take up arms against that sin. Rather be so abstemious, that thy craving appetite will begin to think thy throat cut, than indulge thyself in voluptuousness. We must never *feed our selves without fear*, *Jude 12.* But we must in a special manner fear when temptation is before us. (3.) We must reason our selves into a holy contempt of the gratifications of sense. *If thou be a man given to appetite*, thou must by a present resolution, and an application of the terrors of the Lord restrain thyself. When thou art in danger of falling into any excess, *put a knife to thy throat*, that may serve for once. But that is not enough, lay the ax to the root, mortify that appetite which hath such a power over thee, *be not desirous of dainties.* Note, We ought to observe what is our own iniquity, and if we find our selves addicted to flesh-pleasing, we must not only stand upon our guard against temptations from without, but subdue the corruption within. Nature is desirous of food, and we are taught to pray for it, but it is lust that is desirous of dainties, and we cannot in faith pray for them, for many times they are not food convenient, either for mind, body, or estate. They are deceitful meat, and therefore David instead of praying for them, prays against them, *Psal. cxli. 4.* They are pleasant to the palate, but perhaps rise in the stomach, turn sour there, upbraid a man, and make him sick. They do not yield men the satisfaction they promised themselves from them, for those that are given to appetite, when they have that which is very dainty, it doth not please, they are soon weary of it, they must have something else more dainty; a luxurious appetite the more it is humoured and indulged, the more humour-

some and troublesome it grows, and the more hard to please; they will surfeit but never satisfy. But especially they are upon this account deceitful meat, that while they please the body they prejudice the soul, they over-charge the heart, and disfit it for the service of God, nay, they take away the heart, and alienate the mind from spiritual delights, and spoil its relish of them. Why then should we covet that which will certainly cheat us?

4. Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. 5. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings, they flee away as an eagle towards heaven.

As some are given to appetite, *ver. 2.* so others to covetousness, and those Solomon here takes to task. Men cheat themselves as much by setting their hearts on money (though it seem most substantial) as by setting them on dainties. Observe,

1. How he dissuades the covetous man from toiling and tormenting himself, *ver. 4.* do not *aim to be rich*; to raise an estate, and to make what thou hast abundance more than it is; we must endeavour to live comfortably, and provide for our children and families, according as our rank and condition is, but we must not seek great things. Be not of those that will be rich, that desire it as their chief good, and design it as their highest end, *1 Tim. vi. 9.* Covetous men think it is their wisdom, imagining that if they be rich to such a degree, they shall be compleatly happy, *cease from that wisdom*, for it is a mistake, *a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*, *Luke xii. 15.* Those that aim at great things,

(1.) They fill their hands with business more than they can grasp, so that their life is both a perfect drudgery, and a perpetual hurry; but be not thou such a fool, *labour not to be rich.* What thou hast and dost be master of it, and not a slave to it, as those that *rise up early, sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness*, and all to be rich. Moderate labour *that we may have to give* is our wisdom and duty, *Eph. iv. 28.* Immoderate labour that we may have hoard is our sin and folly.

(2.) They fill their heads with projects more than they understand, so that their life is a constant toss of care and fear, but do not thou thus vex thyself, *cease from thine own wisdom*, go on quietly in the way of thy business, not contriving new ways, and setting thy wits on work to find out new inventions. Acquiesce in God's wisdom, and cease from thine own, *Prov. iii. 5, 6.*

2. How he dissuades the covetous man from cheating and deceiving himself, by an inordinate love and pursuit of that which is vanity and vexation of spirit; for,

1. It is not substantial and satisfying; *wilt thou be such a fool as to set thine eyes*, to cause thine eyes to fly with eagerness and violence upon *that which is not?* Note, (1.) The things of this world are things that are not. They have a real existence in nature, and are the real gifts of providence, but in the kingdom of grace they are things that are not; they are not a happiness and portion for a soul; are not what they promise to be, nor what we expect them to be; they are a shew, a shadow, a sham upon the soul that trusts to them; they are not, for in a little while they will not be, they will not be ours, they perish in the using; the fashion of them passeth away. (2.) It is therefore folly for us to set our eyes upon them; to admire them as the best things, and appropriate them to ourselves as our good things, and to aim at them, as our mark at which all our actions are levelled; to fly upon them as the eagle upon her prey. Wilt thou do a thing so absurd in it self? What, thou a reasonable creature, wilt thou dote upon shadows? The eyes are put for rational and intellectual powers, wilt thou throw those away upon such undeserving objects? to set the hands and feet upon the world is well enough, but not the eyes, the eyes of the mind, those were made to contemplate better things. Wilt thou, my son, that professeth religion, put such an affront upon God, towards whom thine eyes should ever be, and such an abuse upon thy own soul?

2. It is not durable and abiding. Riches are very uncertain things, certainly they are so. *They make themselves wings and flee away.* The more we cause our eyes to fly upon them, the more likely they are to fly away from us. (1.) Riches will leave us; those that hold them never so fast cannot hold them always, cannot hold them long; either they must be taken from us, or we must be taken from them. The goods are said to flow away as a stream, *Job xx. 28.* here to flee away as a bird.

(2.) Perhaps they may leave us suddenly; when we have taken a great deal of pains for them, and begin to take a great deal of pride and pleasure in them. The covetous man sits hatching upon his wealth, and brooding over it, till it is fledged, as the young ones under the hen, and then it is gone. Or, as if a man should be fond of a flight of wild-fowl that light in his field, and call them his own, because they are upon his ground, whereas if he offer to come near them, they take wing immediately, and are gone to another man's field. (3.) The wings they flee away upon are of their own making; they have in themselves the principles of their own corruption, their own moth and rust. They are wasting in their own nature, and like a handful of dust if it

be griped, it slips through the fingers. Snow will last a while, and look pretty if it be left to lie on the ground where it fell, but if gathered up and laid in the bosom it is dissolved and gone immediately. (4.) They go irresistibly and irrecoverably, *as an eagle towards heaven*, that flies strongly, there is no stopping her, and flies out of sight, and out of call, there is no bringing her back; thus do riches leave men and leave them in grief and vexation if they set their hearts upon them.

6. Eat thou not the bread of *him that hath* an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats. 7. For as he thinketh in his heart, so *is* he: Eat and drink, faith he to thee, but his heart *is* not with thee. 8. The morsel *which* thou hast eaten, shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words.

Those that are voluptuous and given to appetite, (*ver. 2.*) are glad to be where there is good cheer stirring, and those that are covetous and saving, that they may spare at home, will be glad to get a dinner at another man's table; and therefore both are here advised not to be forward to accept of every man's invitation, but especially not to thrust themselves in uninvited. Observe,

1. There are those that pretend to bid their friends welcome, that are not hearty and sincere in it. They have a fair tongue, and know what they should say: *Eat and drink faith he*, because it is expected the master of the feast should so compliment his guests; but they have *an evil eye*, and grudge their guests every bit they eat, especially if they eat freely. They would seem to be liberal in making the entertainment, and would have the credit of it, but they have so great a love to their money, and so little to their friend, that they cannot have the comfort of it, nor any enjoyment of themselves or their friends. The miser's feast is his penance. If a man be so very selfish and fardid, and sneaking that he cannot find in his heart to bid his friends welcome to what he hath, he ought not to add to that the guilt of dissimulation by inviting them, but let him own himself to be what he is, that *the vile person may not be called liberal, or the churl bountiful*, Isa. xxxii. 5.

2. One can have no comfort in accepting the entertainments that are given grudgingly. *Eat not thou the bread* of such a man, let him keep it to himself. Do not sponge upon those that are bountiful, nor make thy self burthensome to any; but especially scorn to be beholden to those that are paltry and not sincere. Better have a dinner of herbs and true welcome, than dainty meats without it. Therefore (1.) Judge of the man as his mind is; thou thinkest to pay thy respect to him as a friend, so thou takest him to be, because he speaks thee fair, but *as he thinks in his heart, so is he*, not as he speaks with his tongue. That we are really both to God and man, that we are inwardly; and neither religion nor friendship are worth any thing further than they are sincere. (2.) Judge of the meat as the digestion is, and as it agrees with thee. He bids thee eat freely, but first or last he will discover his fardid covetous humour, and *as he thinketh in his heart, so he will look*, and give thee to understand that thou art not welcome, and then *the morsel thou hast eaten thou shalt vomit up*, the very thought of that will make thee even to vomit the meat thou hast eaten, and eat the words thou hast spoken in returning his compliments, and giving him thanks for his civilities. Thou shalt *lose thy sweet words*, which he has given thee, and thou hast given him.

9. Speak not in the ears of a fool; for he will despise the wisdom of thy words.

We are here directed not to *cast pearls before swine*, Matt. vii. 6. and not to expose things sacred to the contempt and ridicule of profane scoffers. It is our duty to take all fit occasions to speak of divine things; but,

1. There are some that will make a jest of every thing, though it be never so prudently and pertinently spoken; that will not only despise a wise man's words, but despise even the wisdom of them, that in them which is most improveable for their own edification; that they will particularly run upon, as if it had an ill design upon them, which they must guard against.

2. Those that do so, forfeit the benefit of good advice and instruction, and a wise man is not only allowed, but advised not to *speak in the ears* of such fools; let them be foolish still, and let not precious breath be thrown away upon them. If what a wise man faith in his wisdom will not be heard, let him hold his peace, and try whether the wisdom of that will be regarded.

10. Remove not the old land-mark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless. 11. For their redeemer *is* mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee.

Note, (1.) The fatherless are taken under God's special protection; with him they not only find mercy shewed to them, *Hof. xiv. 3.* but justice done for them. He is their redeemer, their *goel*, their near kinsman that will take their part, and stand up for them; near jealousy, as taking himself affronted in the in-

juries done to them. As their *redeemer* he will *plead their cause* against those that do them any injury, and one way or other will not only defend their right, and recover it from them, but avenge the wrongs done to them. And he is mighty, almighty; his omnipotence is engaged and employed for their protection, which their proudest and most powerful oppressors will find themselves an unequal match for; and that it is at their peril to contend with it.

(2.) Every man therefore must be careful not to injure them in any thing, or to invade their rights; either by a clandestine removal of the old land-marks, or by a forcible entry into their fields. Being fatherless they have none to right them, and, being in their childhood, they do not so much as apprehend the wrong that is done them. Sense of honour, and much more the fear of God, would restrain men from offering any injury to children, especially fatherless children.

12. Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge. 13. Withhold not correction from the child: for *if* thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. 14. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell. 15. My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine. 16. Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things.

Here is, 1. A parent instructing his child. He is here brought in persuading him to give his mind to his book, and especially to the scriptures and his catechism; to attend to *the words of knowledge*, by which he might come to know his duty, and danger, and interest, and not to think it enough to give them the hearing, but to apply his heart to them; to delight in them, and bow his will to the authority of them. The heart is then applied to the instruction, when the instruction is applied to the heart.

2. A parent correcting his child: A tender parent can scarce find in his heart to do it, it goes much against the grain, but he finds it is necessary, it is his duty, and therefore he dares not *withhold correction* when there is occasion for it; *Spare the rod and spoil the child*; he *beats him with the rod*; gives him a gentle correction, the *stripes of the sons of men*, not such as we give to beasts; *beat him with the rod and he shall not die*; the rod will not kill him; nay, it will prevent his killing himself by those vicious courses which the rod will be necessary to restrain him from. For the present *it is not joyous but grievous*, both to the parent and to the child; but when it is given with wisdom, designed for good, accompanied with prayer, and blessed of God, it may prove a happy means of preventing his utter destruction, and *delivering his soul from hell*. Our great care must be about our childrens souls, we must not see them in danger of hell, and must use all possible means, with the utmost care and concern, to snatch them as brands out of everlasting burnings. Let the body smart, so that the spirit be *saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*.

3. A parent encouraging his child, telling him, 1. What was all he expected; nothing but what would be for his own good, that *his heart be wise*, and that *his lips speak right things*; that he be under the government of good principles, and that by those principles he particularly maintain a good government of his tongue. It is to be hoped, those will do *right things* when they grow up, that learn to *speak right things* when they are young, and dare not speak any naughty words.

2. What a comfort it would be to him if herein he answered his expectation. *If thy heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice*, shall rejoice in thee; even mine who have taken so much care and pains about thee, mine that has many a time asked for thee, for which thou shouldst study thus to make a grateful requital. Note, The wisdom of children will be the joy of their parents and teachers, who have no greater joy than to see them *walk in the truth*, 3 John 4. Children, if you be wise and good, devout and conscientious, God will be pleased with you, and that will be our joy: we shall think our labour in instructing you well bestowed, it will be a comfortable answer for the many prayers we have put up for you, we shall be eased of a great deal of care, shall not need to be so strict and severe in watching over you, and shall consequently be the easier, both to you and to our selves. We shall *rejoice* in hope that you will be a credit and comfort to us, if we should live to be old, that you will bear up the name of Christ in your generation, that you will live comfortably in this world and happily in another.

17. Let not thine heart envy sinners: but *be thou* in the fear of the LORD all the day long. 18. For surely there is an end, and thine expectation shall not be cut off.

Here is, 1. A necessary caution against entertaining any favourable thoughts of prospering profaneness: *Let not thine heart envy sinners*; do not grudge them either the liberty they take to sin, or the success they have in sin, it will cost them dear, and they

are to be pitied, rather than envied. Their prosperity is their portion, *Psal. xvii. 14.* nay, it is *their poison*, *Prov. i. 32.* We must not harbour in our hearts any secret discontent at the providence of God, though it seem to smile upon them, nor wish our selves in their condition. *Let not thine heart imitate sinners*, so some read it; do not as they do, walk not in the way with them, use not the methods they take to enrich themselves, though they thrive by them.

2. An excellent direction to maintain high thoughts of God in our minds at all times: *Be thou in the fear of the Lord*, every day, and *all the day long*; we must be in it as in our employment, exercising our selves in holy adorings of God, in subjection to his precepts, submission to his providences, and a constant care to please him: it is to be in it as in our element, taking a pleasure in contemplating God's glory, and complying with his will. It is to be *devoted to his fear*, *Psal. cxix. 38.* and governed by it as our commanding principle in all we say and do. All the days of our life we must constantly keep up an awe of God upon our spirits, must pay a deference to his authority, and have a dread of his wrath. We must be always so in his fear as never to be out of it.

3. A good reason for both of these, *ver. 18.* *Surely there is an end*, an end and expectation, as *Jer. xxix. 11.* *There will be an end of the prosperity of the wicked*, therefore do not envy them, *Psal. lxxiii. 17.* there will be an end of thy afflictions, therefore be not weary of them; an end of thy services, thy work and warfare will be accomplished, *perfect love will cast out fear*, and *thine expectation* of the reward will not only be not cut off, or disappointed, but infinitely out-done. The consideration of the end will help to reconcile us to all the difficulties and discouragements of the way.

19. Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way. 20. Be not amongst wine-bibbers; amongst riotous eaters of flesh. 21. For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowiness shall clothe a man with rags. 22. Harken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old. 23. Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding. 24. The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child, shall have joy of him. 25. Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice. 26. My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways. 27. For an whore is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit. 28. She also lieth in wait as for a prey, and increaseth the transgressors among men.

Here is good advice for parents to give to their children: words are put into their mouths that they may *train them up in the way they should go*.

Here is, 1. An earnest call to young people to attend to the advice of their godly parents; not only to this that is here given, but to all other profitable instructions. *Hear, my son, and be wise*, *ver. 19.* This will be an evidence that thou art wise, and a means to make thee wiser. Wisdom, as *Faith, comes by hearing*. And again, *ver. 22.* *Harken unto thy father that begat thee*, and who therefore hath an authority over thee, and an affection for thee, and thou mayst be sure can have no other design but thine own good. We ought to *give reverence to the fathers of our flesh*, who begat us, and were the instruments of our being; much more ought we to obey, and be in subjection to the *Father of our spirits*, who made us, and is the author of our being. And since the mother also, in sense of duty to God, and in love to her child, gives him good instructions, let him not *despise her*, or her advice, *when she is old*. When the mother is grown old, we may suppose the children to be grown up, but let them not think themselves past being taught, even by her; but rather respect her the more for the multitude of her years, and the wisdom which they teach. Scornful and insolent young men will make a jest, it may be, of the good advice of an aged mother, and think themselves not concerned to heed what an old woman saith; but such will have a great deal to answer for another day, not only as having set at nought good counsel, but as having slighted and grieved a good mother, *Eprov. xxx. 17.*

2. An argument to enforce this call taken from the great comfort which this will be to their parents, *ver. 24, 25.* Note, 1. It is the duty of children to study how they may rejoice the hearts of their good parents, and do it yet more and more, so as that they may greatly rejoice in them, even when the *evil days come*, and the *years of which they say they have no pleasure in them*, but this, to see their children do well; as *Barzillai* to see *Chimham* preferred. 2. Children will be a joy to their parents, if they be *righteous and wise*. Righteousness is true wisdom; they that do good, do well for themselves. Those are compleatly such as they should be, that are not only wise, *i. e.* knowing and learned, but *righteous, i. e.*

honest and good; and not only *righteous, i. e.* conscientious and well-meaning, but *wise, i. e.* prudent and discreet in the management of themselves. If such the children be, especially all the children, the father and mother will be glad, and think nothing too much that they have done or do for them; they will please themselves in them, and give God thanks for them; particularly she that bare them with pain, and nursed them with pains, will rejoice in them, and reckon her self well requited, and the sorrow more than forgotten, because a wise and good man is the product of it, who is a blessing to the world he was born into.

3. Some general precepts of wisdom and virtue. (1.) *Guide thine heart in the way*, *ver. 19.* It is the heart that must be taken care of and directed aright, the motions and affections of the soul must be towards right objects, and under a steady conduct. If the heart be guided in the way the steps will be guided, and the conversation well ordered.

(2.) *Buy the truth and sell it not*, *ver. 13.* Truth is that by which the heart must be guided and governed, for without truth there is no goodness, no regular practices without right principles. It is by the power of truth known and believed that we must be restrained from sin, and constrained to duty: the understanding must be well informed with wisdom and instruction. And therefore, (1.) We must buy it, *i. e.* be willing to part with any thing for it: he doth not say at what rate we must buy it, because we cannot buy it too dear, but must have it at any rate, whatever it cost us we shall not repent the bargain. When we are at expence for the means of knowledge, and resolved not to starve so good a cause, then we *buy the truth*: riches should be employed for the getting knowledge, rather than knowledge for the getting of riches. When we are at pains in searching after truth, that we may come to the knowledge of it, and may distinguish between it and error, then we buy it; *Dii laboribus omnia vendunt*. When we choose rather to suffer loss in our temporal interest, than to deny or neglect the truth, then we buy it, and it is a pearl of such great price, that we must be willing to part with all to purchase it; make shipwreck of estate, trade, preferment, rather than of faith and a good conscience. (2.) We must not *sell it*; do not part with it for pleasures, honours, riches, any thing in this world; do not neglect the study of it, nor throw off the profession of it, nor revolt from under the dominion of it, for the getting or saving of any secular interest whatsoever. *Hold fast the form of sound words*, and never let it go upon any terms.

(3.) *Give me thine heart*, *ver. 26.* God, in this exhortation, speaketh to us as unto children, son, daughter, *Give me thy heart*. The heart is that which the great God requires and calls for from every one of us; whatever we give, if we do not give him our hearts it will not be accepted. We must set our love upon him. Our thoughts must converse much with him, and on him as our highest end, *the intents of our hearts* must be fastened. We must make it our own act and deed to devote ourselves to the Lord, and we must be free and chearful in it. We must not think to divide the heart between God and the world; he will have all or none; *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*. To this call we must readily answer, *my Father, take my heart*, such as it is, and make it such as it should be, take possession of it, and set up thy throne in it.

(4.) *Let thine eyes observe my ways*; have an eye to the rule of God's word, the conduct of his providence; and the good examples of his people; our eyes must observe these, as he that writes observes his copy, that we may keep in the right paths, and may proceed and persevere in them.

4. Some particular cautions against those sins which are of all other the most destructive to the seeds of wisdom and grace in the soul, which impoverish and ruin it.

(1.) Gluttony and drunkenness, *ver. 20, 21.* The world is full of examples of this sin, and temptations to it, which all young people are concerned to stand upon their guard against, and keep at a distance from. *Be not a wine-bibber*; we are allowed to drink a little wine, *1 Tim. v. 23.* but not much; not to make a trade of it, never to drink to excess. *Be not a riotous eater of flesh*, as the Israelites were, that lusted exceedingly after it, saying, *Who will give us flesh to eat?* Whereas Paul, though he is free to eat flesh, yet resolves he *will eat no flesh while the world stands, rather than make his brother to offend*; so indifferent is he to it, *1 Cor. viii. 13.* *Be not an excessive eater of flesh*; intemperance must be avoided in meat as well as drink. *Be not a luxurious eater of flesh*; not pleased with any thing but what is very nice, and delicate, savoury dishes, and forced meat. Some take not only a pleasure but a pride in being curious about their diet, and, as they call it, eating well; as if that were the ornament of a gentleman, which is really the shame of a christian; making a god of the belly. *Be not a wine-bibber*, and *be not a riotous eater*; and therefore, *be not among wine-bibbers*, nor among riotous eaters; do not give them countenance, lest thou learn their ways, and insensibly fall into those sins; or at least lose the dread and detestation of them. They covet to have thee among them; for those that are debauched themselves, are very desirous to debauch others; therefore do not gratify them, lest thou endanger thy self. He fetcheth an argument against this sin from the expensiveness of it, and

its tendency to impoverish men: And if men will not be deterred from it by the ruin it brings on their secular interests, which lie nearest their hearts, no marvel they are not frightened from it by what they are told out of the word of God of the mischief it doth them in their spiritual and eternal concerns. *The drunkard and the glutton* hates to be reformed, though he is told he *shall come to poverty*; nay, though he is told he *shall come to hell*. Drunkenness is the cause of *drowsiness*; it stupifies men, and makes them mindless of business, and then all goes to wreck and ruin: Thus men that have lived creditably come to be *clothed with rags*.

(2.) Whoredom: That is another sin which *takes away the heart*, that should be given to God, *Hos. iv. 11*. He shews the danger which attends that sin, *ver. 27, 28*.

1. It is a sin from which few recover themselves when once they are entangled in it. It is like a *deep ditch*, and a *narrow pit*, which it is almost impossible to get out of; and therefore it is wisdom to keep far enough from the brink of. Take heed of making any approaches towards this sin, because it is so hard to make a retreat from it; conscience that should head the retreat being debauched by it, and divine grace forfeited.

2. It is a sin which bewitcheth men to their ruin. *The adulteress lies in wait as a robber*, pretending friendship, but intending the greatest mischief, to rob men of all they have that is valuable, to strip them both of their armour, and of their ornaments. Even those that, being virtuously educated, endeavour to shun the adulteress, she will *lie in wait* for them, that she may assault them when they are off their guard, and she hath them at an advantage. Let none therefore be at any time secure.

3. It is a sin that contributes more than any other to the spreading of vice and immorality in a kingdom. *It increaseth the transgressors among men*: One adulteress may be the ruin of many a precious soul, and may help to debauch a whole town. It increaseth the treacherous or perfidious ones; it not only occasions husbands to be false to their wives, and servants to their masters, but many that have professed religion to throw off their profession, and break their covenants with God. Houses of uncleanness are therefore such pest-houses as ought to be suppressed by those whose office it is to take care of the publick welfare.

29. Who hath wo? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? 30. They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixt wine. 31. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth it self aright. 32. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. 33. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. 34. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. 35. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.

Solomon here gives fair warning against the sin of drunkenness, to confirm what he had said, *ver. 20*.

1. He cautions all people to keep out of the way of temptations to this sin, *ver. 31*. *Look not thou upon the wine when it is red*. Red wine was in Canaan looked upon as the best wine, it is therefore called the blood of the grape. Criticks judge of wine, among other indications, by the colour of it; some wine they say looks charmingly, looks so well, that it even saith, *Come and drink me*; it *moves it self aright*, goes down very smoothly, or, perhaps, the roughness of it is grateful! It is said of generous, strong bodied wine, that it even *causeth the lips of those that are asleep to speak*, *Cant. vii. 9*. but *look not thou upon it*; (1.) Be not ruled by sense, but reason and religion; covet not that which pleaseth the eye, in hopes that it will please the taste, but let thy serious thoughts correct the errors of thy senses, and convince thee that that which seems delightful is really hurtful, and resolve against it accordingly. Let not the heart walk after the eye, for it is a deceitful guide. (2.) Be not too bold with the charms of this or any other sin; *look not* lest thou lust, lest thou take the forbidden fruit. Note, Those that would be kept from any sin, must keep themselves from all the occasions and beginnings of it, and be afraid of coming within reach of its allurements, lest they be overcome by them.

2. He shews the many pernicious consequences of the sin of drunkenness, for the enforcement of this caution. Take heed of the bait for fear of the hook: *At the last it bites*, *ver. 32*. All sin will be bitterness in the end, and this sin particularly. *It bites like a serpent*: When the drunkard is made sick by his surfeit, thrown into a dropsy, or some fatal disease by it; beggared and ruined in his estate, especially when his conscience is awakened; and he cannot reflect upon it without horror and indignation at himself: but worst of all, at last, when the cup of drunkenness shall be turned into a cup of trembling, the cup of the Lord's wrath, the dregs of

which he must be for ever drinking, and shall not have a drop of water to cool his enflamed tongue. To take off the force of the temptation that there is in the pleasure of the sin, foresee the punishment of it, and what it will at last end in; if repentance prevent not. *In its latter end it bites*, so the word is; think therefore what will be *in the end thereof*.

But he chooseth to instance in those pernicious consequences of this sin, which are present and sensible.

1. It embroils men in quarrels, makes them quarrel with others, and say and do that which gives others occasion to quarrel with them, *ver. 29*. He asks, *Who hath wo? who hath sorrow?* Who has not in this world? Many have wo and sorrow, and cannot help it; but drunkards wilfully create wo and sorrow to themselves; they that have *contentions*, have *wo* and *sorrow*; and drunkards are the fools whose *lips enter into contention*: When the wine is in, the wit is out, and the passions up; and thence come drunken scuffles; and drunken frays, and drunken disputes over the cups; many a vexatious, ruining law-suit hath begun thus. There is *babbling*, quarrels in word, and the exchanging of scurrilous language; yet it rests not there; you shall have *wounds without cause*, for causes are things which drunkards are in no capacity to judge of, and therefore deal blows about without the least consideration why or wherefore, and must expect to be in like manner treated themselves. The wounds which men receive in defence of their country and its just rights, are their honour; but *wounds without cause*, received in service of their lusts, are marks of their infamy. Nay, drunkards wound themselves, in a tender part, for they have *redness of eyes*, symptoms of an inward inflammation; their sight is weakened by it, and their looks deformed. This comes, 1. Of drinking long, *tarrying long at the wine*, and spending that time in drunken company which should be spent in useful business, or in sleep which should fit for business, *ver. 30*. O the precious hours which thousands throw away thus; every one of which will be brought into the account at the great day! 2. Of drinking that which is strong and intoxicating. *They go up and down to seek wine* that will please them; their great enquiry, where is the best liquor? *They seek mixt wine*, which is most palatable, but most heady; so willingly do they sacrifice their reason to please their palate!

2. It makes men impure and insolent, *ver. 33*. (1.) The eyes grow unruly, and *behold strange women* to lust after them, and so let in adultery into the heart. *Est Venus in vinis*. Wine is oil to the fire of lust. *Thine eyes shall behold strange things*; so some read it: When men are drunk, the house turns round with them, and every thing looks strangely to them, so that then they cannot trust their own eyes. (2.) The tongue also grows unruly, and talks extravagantly; by it the *heart utters perverse things*, things contrary to reason, religion, and common civility; which they would be ashamed to speak if they were sober. What ridiculous, incoherent nonsense will men talk when they are drunk, that at another time will speak admirably well, and to the purpose?

3. It stupifies and befots men, *ver. 34*. When men are drunk, they know not where they are, nor what they say and do. (1.) Their heads are giddy, and when they lie down to sleep, they are as if they were tossed by the rolling waves of the sea, or upon the top of a mast; hence they complain that their heads swim; their sleeps are commonly uneasy, and not refreshing; and their dreams tumultuous. (2.) Their judgments are clouded and muddled, and they have no more steadiness and consistency, than he that sleeps upon the top of a mast; they *drink and forget the law*, *Prov. xxxi. 5*: they *err through wine*, *Isa. xxviii. 9*. and think as extravagantly as they talk. (3.) They are mindless and fearless of danger, and senseless of the rebukes they are under, either from God or man: They are in imminent danger of death, of damnation, lie as much exposed as if they slept upon the top of a mast, and yet are secure, and sleep on. They fear no peril when the terrors of the Lord are laid before them; nay, they feel no pain when the judgments of God are actually upon them; they cry not when he binds them. Set a drunkard in the stocks, and he is not sensible of the punishment; *They have stricken me, and I was not sick; I felt it not*, it made no impression at all upon me: Drunkenness turns men into stocks and stones, they are scarce to be reckoned animals; they are dead while they live.

4. (Which is worst of all) the heart is hardened in the sin, and the sinner, notwithstanding all these present mischiefs that attend it, obstinately persists in it, and hates to be reformed. *When shall I awake?* Much ado he has to shake off the chains of his drunken sleep, he can hardly get clear of the fumes of the wine, though he strives with them, that, being thirsty in the morning, he may return to it again. So perfectly lost is he to all sense of virtue and honour, and so wretchedly is his conscience seared, that he is not ashamed to say, *I will seek it yet again!* *There is no hope*; *no*, they have loved drunkards, and after them they will go, *Jer. ii. 25*. This is *adding drunkenness to thirst*, and *following strong drink*; those that do so may read their doom, *Deut. xxix. 19, 20*. their *wo*, *Isa. v. 11*. and if this be the end of the sin, with good reason were we bid to stop at the beginning of it: *Look not upon the wine when it is red*.

C H A P. XXIV.

BE not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them. 2. For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief.

Here, 1. The caution given is much the same with that which we had before, chap. xxiii. 17. not to envy sinners; not to think them happy, nor to wish our selves in their condition, though they prosper never so much in this world, and are never so merry, and never so secure. Let not such a thought ever come into thy mind; O that I could shake off the restraints of religion and conscience, and take as great a liberty to indulge the sensual appetite, as I see such and such do! No; *desire not to be with them*, to do as they do, and fare as they fare, and to *cast in thy lot among them*.

2. Here is another reason given for this caution; *be not envious against them*; not only because their end will be bad, but because their way is so, ver. 2. Do not think with them, *for their heart studieth destruction* to others, but it will prove destruction to themselves. Do not speak like them, *for their lips talk of their mischief*. All they say has an ill tendency; to dishonour God, reproach religion, or wrong their neighbour; but it will be mischief to themselves at last. It is therefore thy wisdom to have nothing to do with them; nor hast thou any reason to look upon them with envy, but with pity rather, or a just indignation at their wicked practices.

3. Through wisdom is an house builded, and by understanding it is established: 4. And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches. 5. A wise man is strong, yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength. 6. For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.

We are tempted to envy those that grow rich, and raise their estates and families by such unjust courses as our consciences will by no means suffer us to use: But, to set aside that temptation, Solomon here shews, that a man, with prudent management, may raise his estate and family by lawful and honest means, with a good conscience, and a good name, and the blessing of God upon it; and if the other be raised a little sooner, yet these will last a great deal longer.

1. That which is here recommended to us, as having the best influence upon our outward prosperity, is *wisdom*, and *understanding*, and *knowledge*; that is, both piety towards God, for that is true wisdom, and prudence in the management of our outward affairs. We must govern our selves in every thing by the rules of religion first, and then of discretion. Some that are truly pious, do not thrive in the world for want of prudence; and some that are prudent enough, yet do not prosper, because they lean to their own understanding, and do not acknowledge God in their ways; therefore both must go together to compleat a wise man.

2. That which is here set before us as the advantage of true wisdom, is, that it will make mens outward affairs prosperous and successful.

(1.) It will *build a house, and establish it*, ver. 3. Men may by unrighteous practices build their houses, but they cannot establish them, for the foundation is rotten, *Hab. ii. 9, 10.* whereas what is honestly got will wear like steel, and be an inheritance to children's children.

(2.) It will enrich a house, and furnish it, ver. 4. Those that manage their affairs with wisdom and equity, that are diligent in the use of lawful means for increasing what they have, that spare from luxury, and spend in charity, they are in a fair way to have their shops, their warehouses, their *chambers filled with all precious and pleasant riches*; precious, because got by honest labour, and *the substance of a diligent man is precious*; pleasant, because enjoyed with holy cheerfulness; some think this is to be understood chiefly of spiritual riches: *by knowledge the chambers of the soul are filled with the graces and comforts of the Spirit*, those *precious and pleasant riches*, for the Spirit, by enlightning the understanding, performs all his other operations on the soul.

3. It will fortify a house and turn it into a castle. *Wisdom is better than weapons of war*, offensive or defensive: *a wise man is in strength*, is in a strong hold, yea, *a man of knowledge strengthens might*, i. e. *increaseth it*, ver. 5. As we grow in knowledge we grow in all grace, *2 Pet. iii. 18.* Those that *increase in wisdom are strengthened with all might*, Col. i. 9, 11. A wise man will compass that by his wisdom which a strong man cannot effect by force of arms. The spirit is strengthened both for the spiritual work and the spiritual warfare by true wisdom.

4. It will govern a house and a kingdom too, and the affairs of both, ver. 6. Wisdom will erect a college or counsel of state. Wisdom will be of use, 1. For the managing of the publick quarrels, so as not to engage in them but for an honest cause, and with some probability of success; and when they are engaged, to

manage them well, and so as to make either an advantageous peace, or an honourable retreat. *By wise counsel thou shalt make war*; and which is a thing that may prove of ill consequence if not done by wise counsel. 2. For the securing of the publick peace; in *the multitude of counsellors there is safety*, for one may foresee the danger, and discern the advantages which another cannot. In our spiritual conflicts we need wisdom, for our enemy is subtil.

7. Wisdom is too high for a fool: he openeth not his mouth in the gate. 8. He that deviseth to do evil, shall be called a mischievous person. 9. The thought of foolishness is sin: and the scorner is an abomination to men.

Here is the description,

1. Of a weak man. *Wisdom is too high* for him; he thinks it so, and therefore despairing to attain to it, he will take no pains in the pursuit of it, but sit down content without it. And really it is so, he has not capacity for it, and therefore the advantages he has for getting it are all in vain to him. It is no easy thing to get wisdom, those that have natural parts good enough, yet if they be foolish, i. e. if they be slothful and will not take pains, if they be playful and trifling and given to their pleasures, if they be viciously inclined and keep bad company, it is *too high* for them, they are not likely to reach it. And for want of it they are unfit for the service of their country, they *open not their mouth in the gate*, they are not admitted into the council of magistracy, or if they are, they are dumb statues and stand for cyphers, they say nothing because they have nothing to say, and they know that if they should offer any thing it would not be heeded, nay, it would be hissed at. Let young men take pains to get wisdom, that they may be qualified for publick business, and do it with reputation.

2. Of a wicked man, who is not only despised as a fool is, but detested. Two sorts of wicked men are so.

(1.) Such as are secretly malicious. Though they speak people fair, and carry it plausibly, they *devise to do evil*, are contriving to do an ill turn to those they bear a grudge to, or have an envious eye at; he that doth so, *shall be called a mischievous person*, or, *a master of mischief*; which, perhaps, was then a common name of reproach; he shall be branded as an *inventer of evil things*, Rom. i. 30. or, if any mischief be done, he shall be suspected as the author of it, or at least accessary to it. This *devising evil* is the *thought of foolishness*, ver. 9. It is made light of, and turned off with a jest, as only a foolish thing, but really it is *sin*, it is exceeding sinful; you cannot call it by a worse name than to call it sin: It is bad to do evil, but it is worse to devise it; for that has in it the subtilty and poison of the old serpent. But it may be taken more generally: We contract guilt, not only by the act of foolishness, but by the thought of it, though it go no further; the first risings of sin in the heart are sin, offensive to God, and must be repented of, or we are undone. Not only malicious, unclean, proud thoughts, but even foolish thoughts are sinful thoughts: If *vain thoughts lodge in the heart* they defile it, *Jer. iv. 14.* which is a reason why we should *keep our hearts with all diligence*, and harbour no thoughts there which cannot give a good account of themselves, *Gen. vi. 5.*

(2.) Such as are openly abusive. *The scorner*, who gives ill language to every body, takes a pleasure in affronting people, and reflecting upon them, he is *an abomination to men*, none that have any sense of honour and virtue will care to keep company with him. *The seat of the scornful is the pestilential chair* (as the Seventy call it, *Psal. i. 1.*) which no wise man will come near for fear of taking the infection. Those that strive to make others odious do but make themselves so.

10. If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.

Note, 1. In a *day of adversity* we are apt to faint, to droop, and be discouraged, and desist from our work, and to despair of relief. Our spirits sink, and then our hands hang down, and our knees grow feeble, and we become unfit for any thing. And many times those that are most cheerful when they are well, droop most, and are most dejected when any thing ails them.

2. This is an evidence that our *strength is small*, and is a means of weakning it more. It is a sign thou art not a man of any resolution, any firmness of thought, any consideration, any faith, (for that is the strength of a soul) if thou canst not bear up under an afflictive change of thy condition. Some are so feeble that they can bear nothing; if a trouble doth but touch them, *Job iv. 5.* nay, if it doth but threaten them, they faint immediately, and are ready to give up all for gone: and by this means they render themselves unfit to grapple with their trouble, and unable to help themselves. *Be of good courage therefore, and God shall strengthen thy heart.*

11. If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain: 12. If thou

thou sayest; Behold, we knew it not: doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?

Here is, 1. A great duty required of us; and that is, to appear for the relief of oppressed innocency; if we see the lives or livelihoods of any in danger of being taken away unjustly, we ought to bestir our selves all we can to save them, by disproving the false accusations on which they are condemned; and seeking out proofs of their innocency; though the persons be not such as we are under any particular obligation to, we must help them out of a general zeal for justice: If any be set upon by force and violence, and it is in our power to rescue them, we ought to do it: Nay, if we see any through ignorance exposing themselves to danger, or fallen in distress, as travellers upon the road; ships at sea, or any the like, it is our duty, though it be with peril to our selves, to hasten with help to them, and not *forbear to deliver them*; not be slack, or remiss, or indifferent in such a case.

2. An answer to the excuse that is commonly made for the omission of this duty. Thou wilt say, *Behold, we knew it not*; we were not aware of the imminency of the danger the person was in, we could not be sure that he was innocent, nor did we know how to prove it, nor which way to do any thing in favour of him, else we would have helped him: Now, (1.) It is easy to make such an excuse as this, sufficient to avoid the censures of men, for, perhaps, they cannot disprove us, when we say, *we knew it not*; or we forgot: And the temptation to tell a lie for the excusing of a fault is very strong, when we know it is impossible to be disproved; but the truth lies wholly in our own breast; as to say, *we thought so and so, and really designed it*; which none is conscious to but our selves. (2.) It is not so easy with such excuses to evade the judgment of God; and to the discovery of that we lie open, and by the determination of that we must abide. Now, 1. God *pondereth the heart*, and *keepeth the soul*; he keeps an eye upon it, observes all the motions of it; its most secret thoughts and intents are all naked and open before him: It is his prerogative; and that in which he glories, *Jer. xvii. 10. I the Lord search the heart*; he *keeps the soul*, holds it in life: This is a good reason why we should be tender of the lives of others; and do all we can to preserve them, because our lives have been precious in the sight of God, and he has graciously kept them. 2. He knows and considers whether the excuse we make be true or no; whether it was because we did not know it; or whether the true reason was not because we did not love our neighbour as we ought, but were selfish; and regardless both of God and man. Let this serve to silence all our frivolous pleas, by which we think to stop the mouth of conscience when it charges us with the omission of plain duty; *Doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it?* 3. He will judge us accordingly: As his knowledge cannot be imposed upon, so his justice cannot be biased; but he will *render to every man according to his works*; not only the commission of evil works, but the omission of good works.

13. My son, eat thou honey; because it is good; and the honey-comb, which is sweet to thy taste: 14. So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.

We are here quickened to the study of wisdom; by the consideration both of the pleasure and profit of it.

1. It will be very pleasant; we *eat honey, because it is sweet to the taste*, and upon that account we call it *good*, especially that which runs first from the honey-comb. Canaan was said to flow with milk and honey, and it was the common food of the country, *Luke xxiv. 41, 42.* even for children, *Isa. vii. 15.* Thus should we feed upon wisdom, and relish the good instructions of it. They that have tasted honey, need no further proof that it is sweet, nor can they by any argument be convinced of the contrary; so those that have experienced the power of truth and godliness, are abundantly satisfied of the pleasure of both; they have tasted the sweetness of them, and all the atheists in the world with their sophistry, and the profane with their banter, cannot alter their sentiments.

2. It will be very profitable; Honey may be *sweet to the taste*; and yet not wholesome, but wisdom has a future recompence attending it, as well as a present sweetness in it. Thou art permitted to *eat honey*, and the agreeableness of it to thy taste invites thee to it: But thou hast much more reason to relish and digest the precepts of wisdom; for *when thou hast found that, there shall be a reward*, thou shalt be paid for thy pleasure, while the servants of sin pay dear for their pains. Wisdom doth indeed set thee to work, but *there shall be a reward*; it doth indeed raise great expectations in thee, but as thy labour, so thy hope shall not be in vain, *thy expectation shall not be cut off*, chap. xxiii. 18. nay, it shall be infinitely outdone.

15. Lay not wait, O wicked man; against the dwelling of the righteous: spoil not his resting-place: 16. For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.

This is spoken, not so much by way of counsel to wicked men, they will not receive instruction, (*chap. xxiii. 9.*) but rather in defiance of them, for the encouragement of good people that are threatened by them. See here,

1. The designs of the wicked against the righteous, and the success they promise themselves in those designs. The plot is laid deep, they *lay wait against the dwelling of the righteous*, thinking to charge some iniquity upon it, or compass some design against it; they lie in wait at the door, to catch him when he stirs out, as David's persecutors, *Psal. lix. tit.* The hope is raised high, they doubt not but to *spoil his dwelling-place*, because he is weak, and cannot support it; because his condition is low and distressed, and he is almost down already. All this is a fruit of the old enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman. *The blood-thirsty hate the upright.*

2. The folly and frustration of these designs.

(1.) The righteous man, whose ruin was expected, recovers himself; he *falls seven times* into trouble, but, by the blessing of God upon his wisdom and integrity, he *riseth up again*, sees through his troubles, and sees better times after them. The *just man falls* sometimes, *falls seven times*, perhaps, into sin, sins of infirmity, through the surprise of temptation, but he *riseth up again*, by repentance, finds mercy with God, and regains his peace.

(2.) The wicked man, that expected to see his ruin, and to help it forward, is undone, he *falls into mischief*; his sins and his troubles are his utter destruction.

17. Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth; and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: 18. Let the LORD see it, and it displease him; and he turn away his wrath from him.

Here, 1. The pleasure we are apt to take in the troubles of an enemy is forbidden us: If any have done us an ill turn, or we bear them an ill will only because they stand in our light, or in our way; when any damage comes to them, suppose they *fall*; or any danger, suppose they *stumble*; our corrupt hearts conceive a secret delight and satisfaction in it; *Aha, so would we have it; they are entangled, the wilderness hath shut them in*: Or, as Tyrus said concerning Jerusalem, *Ezek. xxvi. 2. I shall be replenished, now she is laid waste*: Men hope in the ruin of their enemies or rivals to reak their revenge, or to find their account; but be not thou so inhumane; *rejoice not when the worst enemy thou hast falleth*: There may be a holy joy in the destruction of God's enemies, as it tends to the glory of God, and the welfare of the church, *Psal. lviii. 10.* but in the ruin of our enemies, as such, we must by no means rejoice; on the contrary, we must *weep*, even *with them when they weep*, as David, *Psal. xxxv. 13, 14.* and that in sincerity; not so much as letting our hearts be secretly glad at their calamities.

2. The provocation which that pleasure gives to God, is affigned as the reason of that prohibition. *The Lord will see it*; though it be hid in the heart only, and it will *displease him*; as it will displease a prudent father to see one child triumph in the correction of another, which he ought to tremble at, and take warning by; not knowing how soon it may be his own case, he having so oft deserved it. He adds an argument *ad hominem*; thou canst not do a greater kindness to *thine enemy*, when he is fallen, than to rejoice in it; for then, to cross thee, and vex thee, God will *turn his wrath from him*; for as *the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*, so the righteousness of God was never intended to gratify the wrath of man, and humour his foolish passions; rather than seem to do that, he will adjourn the executions of his wrath: Nay, it is implied, that when he *turns his wrath from him*, he will turn it against thee, and the cup of trembling shall be put into thy hand.

19. Fret not thy self because of evil men; neither be thou envious at the wicked: 20. For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out:

Here, 1. He repeats the caution he had before given against envying the pleasures and successes of wicked men in their wicked ways. This he quotes from his father David, *Psal. xxxvii. 1.* We must not in any case *fret* our selves, or make our selves uneasy, whatever God doth in his providence, how disagreeable soever it is to our sentiments; interests, and expectations, we must acquiesce in it: Even that which grieves us must not *fret* us; nor must our eye be evil against any, because God is good: Are we more wise or just than he? If wicked people prosper, we must not therefore incline to do as they do.

2. He gives a reason for this caution, taken from the end of that way which wicked men walk in: Envy not their prosperity; for,

1. There is no true happiness in it: *There shall be no reward to the evil man*; his prosperity only serves for his present subsistence; these are all the good things he must even expect; there is none intended him in the world of retribution: *He hath his reward*, Matt. vi. 2. He shall have none. Those are not to be envied that have their portion in this life, and must out-live it, *Psalms* xvii. 14. 2. There is no continuance in it: Their candle shines bright, but it shall presently be put out, and a final period put to all their comforts, *Job* xxi. 17. *Psalms* xxxvii. 1, 2.

21. My son, fear thou the LORD, and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change. 22. For their calamity shall rise suddenly, and who knoweth the ruin of them both?

Note, 1. Religion and loyalty must go together. As men, it is our duty to honour our Creator, to worship and reverence him, and to be always in his fear; as members of a community, incorporated for mutual benefit, it is our duty to be faithful and dutiful to the government God hath set over us, *Rom.* xiii. 1, 2. Those that are truly religious will be loyal, in conscience towards God; the godly in the land will be the *quiet in the land*; and those are not truly loyal, or will be so no longer than is for their interest, that are not religious. How should he be true to his prince, that is false to his God? And if they come in competition, it is an adjudged case, we must obey God rather than men.

2. Innovations in both are to be dreaded. Have nothing to do, he doth not say, with them that change, for there may be cause to change for the better, but *that are given to change*, that affect it for change sake, out of a peevish discontent with that which is, and a fondness for novelty; or a desire to fish in troubled waters. *Meddle not with them that are given to change*, either in religion, or in the civil government; *come not into their secret*, join not with them in their cabals, nor enter into the mystery of their iniquity.

3. Those that are of restless, factious, turbulent spirits, commonly pull mischief upon their own heads ere they are aware. *Their calamity shall rise suddenly*: Though they carry on their designs with the utmost secrecy, they will be discovered, and brought to condign punishment when they little think of it. *Who knows the time and manner of the ruin which both God and the king will bring on their contemners, both on them, and them that meddle with them.*

23. These things also belong to the wise. It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment. 24. He that faith unto the wicked, Thou art righteous; him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him. 25. But to them that rebuke him shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them. 26. Every man shall kiss his lips that giveth a right answer.

Here are lessons for wise men, i. e. judges and princes. As subjects must do their duty, and be obedient to magistrates, so magistrates must do their duty in administering justice to their subjects, both in pleas of the crown, and causes between party and party. These are lessons for them.

1. They must always weigh the merits of a cause, and not be swayed by any regard, one way or other, to the parties concerned. *It is not good in it self, nor can it ever do well, to have respect of persons in judgment*; the consequences of it cannot but be the perverting of justice, and doing wrong under colour of law and equity. A good judge will know the truth, not know faces, so as to countenance a friend, and help him out in a bad cause; or so much as omit any thing that can be said or done in favour of a righteous cause, when it is the cause of an enemy.

2. They must never give any connivance or encouragement to wicked people in their wicked practices. Magistrates in their places, and ministers in theirs, are to deal faithfully with the wicked man, though he be a great man, or a particular friend; to convict him of his wickedness, to shew him what will be in the end thereof, to discover him to others that they may avoid him. But if those, whose office it is thus to shew people their transgressions, palliate them, and connive at them; if they excuse for the wicked man, much more if they prefer him, and associate with him, which is, in effect, to say, *Thou art righteous*, they shall justly be looked upon as enemies to the publick peace and welfare, which they ought to advance, and *the people shall curse them*, and cry out shame on them; and even those of other nations shall abhor them, as base betrayers of their trust.

3. They must discountenance, and give check to all fraud and violence, injustice and immorality; and though thereby they may disoblige a particular person, yet they will recommend themselves to the favour of God and man. Let magistrates and ministers, and private persons too, that are capable of doing it, rebuke the wicked, that they may bring them to repentance, or put them to shame, and they shall have the comfort of it in their own bosoms; *to them shall be delight*, when their consciences witness for them,

that they have been witnesses for God; and a good blessing shall come upon them, the blessing of God and good men; they shall be deemed religious patrons, and their country's patriots. See *Prov.* xxviii. 23.

4. They must always give judgment according to equity, *ver.* 26. *Give a right answer*, i. e. give their opinion, and pass sentence according to law, and the true merits of the cause, and every one shall kiss his lips that doth so, i. e. shall love and honour him, and be subject to his orders, for there is a kiss of allegiance, as well as of affection. He that in common conversation likewise speaks pertinently, and with sincerity, recommends himself to his company, and is beloved and respected by all.

27. Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thy self in the field; and afterwards build thine house.

This is a rule of prudence in the management of household affairs; for all good men should be good husbands, and manage with discretion, which would prevent a great deal of sin, and trouble, and disgrace, to their profession.

1. We must prefer necessities before conveniences, and not lay that out for shew which should be expended for the support of the family. We must be content with a mean cottage for a habitation, rather than want, or go in debt for food convenient.

2. We must not think of building till we can afford it; first apply thy self to *thy work without in the field*, let thy ground be put into good order, look after thy husbandry, for that is it by which thou must get; and when thou hast got well by that, then, and not till then, thou mayest think of re-building and beautifying thy house, for that is it upon which, and in which thou wilt have occasion to spend. Many have ruined their estates and families, by laying out money on that which brings nothing in; and beginning to build, when they were not able to finish. Some understand it as an advice to young men not to marry (for by that the house is built) till they have set up in the world, and got wherewith to maintain a wife and children comfortably.

3. When we have any great design on foot, it is wisdom to take it before us, and make the necessary preparations before we fall to work, that, when it is begun, it may not stand still for want of materials. Solomon observed this rule himself in building the house of God, all was made ready before it was brought to the ground, *1 Kings* vi. 7.

28. Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause: and deceive not with thy lips. 29. Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work.

We are here forbidden to be in any thing injurious to our neighbour, particularly in and by the forms of law; either, 1. As a witness: Never bear a testimony against any man without cause, unless what thou sayest thou knowest to be punctually true, and thou hast a clear call to testify it. Never bear a false testimony against any one; for it follows, *deceive not with thy lips*; deceive not thy judge and jury, deceive not those whom thou conversest with, into an ill opinion of thy neighbour. When thou speakest of thy neighbour, do not only speak that which is true, but take heed, lest in the manner of thy speaking thou insinuate any thing that is otherwise, and so shouldst deceive by innuendoes or hyperboles.

Or, 2. As a plaintiff, or prosecutor. If there be occasion to bring an action or information against thy neighbour, let it not be from a spirit of revenge: Say not, I am resolved I will meet with him, *I will do so to him as he has done to me*; even a righteous cause becomes unrighteous, when it is thus prosecuted with malice: Say not, *I will render to the man according to his work*, and make him pay dear for it; for it is God's prerogative to do so, and we must leave it to him, and not step into his throne, or take his work out of his hands. If we will needs be our own carvers, and judges in our own cause, we forfeit the benefit of an appeal to God's tribunal: Therefore we must not avenge our selves, because he hath said, *Vengeance is mine*.

30. I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding: 31. And lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone-wall thereof was broken down. 32. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. 33. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: 34. So shall thy poverty come, as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.

Here is, 1. The view which Solomon took of the field and vineyard of the slothful man. He did not go on purpose to see it, but, as he passed by, observing the fruitfulness of the ground; as it is very proper for travellers to do, and his subjects management of their land, as it is very proper for magistrates to do, he cast his eye upon a field, and a vineyard, unlike all the rest; for though the soil was good, yet there was nothing growing in them but thorns and nettles;

nettles; not here and there one, but they were all over-run with weeds; and if there had been any fruit it would have been eaten up by the beasts, for there was no fence, *the stone-wall was broken down*. See the effects of that curse upon the ground, *Gen. iii. 18. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee*, and nothing else, unless thou take pains with it. See what a blessing to the world the husbandman's calling is, and what a wilderness this earth, even Canaan it self, would be without it: *The king himself is served of the field*, but he would be ill served if God did not teach the husbandman discretion and diligence to rid the ground, plant it, and sow it, and fence it. See what a great difference there is between some and others in the management even of their worldly affairs, and how little some consult their reputation, not caring though they proclaim their slothfulness, in the manifest effects of it, to all that pass by, shamed by their neighbour's diligence.

2. The reflections which he made upon it. He paused a little, and considered it, looked again upon it, and received instruction: He did not break out into any passionate censures of the owner, did not call him any ill names, but he endeavoured himself to get good by the observation, and to be quickened by it to diligence. Note, Those that are to give instruction to others, must receive instruction themselves: And instruction may be received, not only from what we read and hear, but from what we see; nor only from what we see of the works of God, but from what we see of the manners of men; nor only from mens good manners, but from their evil manners. Plutarch relates a saying of Cato Major, That wise men profit more by fools, than fools by wise men; for wise men will avoid the faults of fools, but fools will not imitate the virtues of wise men. Solomon reckoned he received instruction by this sight, though it did not suggest to him any new notion or lesson, but only put him in mind of an observation he himself had formerly made, both of the ridiculous folly of the sluggard, who when he has needful work to do lies dozing in bed, and cries, *yet a little sleep, a little slumber*, and still it will be a little more, till he has slept his eyes out, and instead of being fitted by sleep for business, as wise men are, he is dulled and stupified, and made good for nothing. And of the certain misery that attends him, his poverty comes as one that travelleth, it is constantly coming nearer and nearer to him, and will be upon him speedily, and want seizeth him as irresistibly as an armed man, a highway-man that will strip him of all he hath.

Now this is applicable, not only to our worldly business, to shew what a scandalous thing slothfulness in that is, and how injurious to the family, but to the affairs of our souls. Note, 1. Our souls are our fields and vineyards, which we are every one of us to take care of, to dress, and to keep. They are capable of being improved; with good husbandry that may be got out of them, which will be fruit abounding to our account. And we are charged with them, to occupy them till our Lord comes; and a great deal of care and pains, it is requisite we should take about them. 2. These fields and vineyards are often in a very ill posture; not only no fruit brought forth, but all overgrown with thorns and nettles, scratching, stinging, inordinate lusts and passions, pride, covetousness, sensuality, malice, those are the thorns and nettles, the wild grapes which the unsanctified heart produceth; no guard kept against the enemy, but the stone-wall broken down; all lies in common, all exposed. 3. Where it is thus, it is long of the sinner's own slothfulness and folly; he is a sluggard, loves sleep, hates labour, and he is void of understanding, understands neither his business nor his interest, he is perfectly befuddled. 4. The issue of it will certainly be the ruin of the soul, and all its welfare. It is everlasting want thus comes upon it as an armed man. We know the place assigned to the wicked and slothful servant.

C H A P. XXV.

1. **T**HESE are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out.

This verse is the title of this latter collection of Solomon's proverbs, for he sought out and set in order many proverbs, that by them he might be still teaching the people knowledge, *Eccl. xii. 9*. Observe,

1. The proverbs were Solomon's, who was divinely inspired to deliver for the use of the church these wise and weighty sentences. We have had many, but still there are more; yet herein Christ is greater than Solomon, for if we had all upon record, that Christ said and did that was instructive, *the world could not contain the books that should be written*, *John xxi. 25*.

2. The publishers were Hezekiah's servants, who it is likely herein acted as his servants, being appointed by him to do this good service to the church, among other good offices that he did in the law and in the commandments, *2 Chron. xxxi. 21*. Whether he employed the prophets in this work as Isaiah, Hosea, or Micah, who lived in his time, or some that were trained up in the schools of the prophets, or some of the priests and Levites, to whom we find him giving a charge concerning divine things, *2 Chron. xxix. 4*. Or (as the Jews think) his princes and ministers of

state, who were more properly called his servants, is not certain; if it was done by Eliakim, and Joah, and Shebna, it was no diminution to their character. They copied out these proverbs from the records of Solomon's reign, and published them as an appendix to the former edition of this book. It may be a piece of very good service to the church to publish other mens works that have lain hid in obscurity, perhaps, a great while. Some think they culled these out of the three thousand proverbs which Solomon spake, *1 Kings iv. 32*. leaving out those that were physical, and that pertained to natural philosophy, and preserving such only as were divine and moral; and in this collection some observe, that special regard was had to those observations that concern kings and their administration.

2. *It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.* 3. *The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable.*

Here is, 1. An instance given of the honour of God; *it is his glory to conceal a matter*. He needs not search into any thing, for he perfectly knows every thing by a clear and certain view, and nothing can be hid from him; and yet his own way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters. There is an unfathomable depth in his counsels, *Rom. xi. 33*. It is but a little portion that is heard of him. Clouds and darkness are round about him. We see what he doth, but we know not the reasons. Some refer it to the sins of men; it is his glory to pardon sin, which is covering it, not remembering it, not mentioning it; his forbearance which he exerciseth towards sinners, is likewise his honour, in which he seems to keep silence, and take no notice of the matter.

2. A double instance of the honour of kings.

1. It is God's glory that he needs not search into a matter, because he knows it without search; but it is the honour of kings with a close application of mind, and by all the methods of enquiry to search out the matters that are brought before them; to take pains in examining offenders, that they may discover their designs, and bring to light the hidden works of darkness; not to give judgment presently till they have weighed things; nor to leave it wholly to others to examine things, but to see with their own eyes.

2. It is God's glory that he cannot himself be found out by searching, and some of that honour is devolved upon kings, wise kings that search out matters; their hearts are unsearchable, like the height of heaven, or the depth of the earth, which we may guess at, but cannot measure. Princes have their *arcana imperii*, designs which are kept private, and reasons of state, which private persons are not competent judges of, and therefore ought not to pry into. Wise princes, when they search into a matter, have reaches which one would not think of, as Solomon when he called for a sword to divide the living child with, designing thereby to discover the true mother.

4. Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer. 5. Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness.

This shews that the vigorous endeavours of a prince to suppress vice, and reform the manners of his people, is the most effectual way to support his government. Observe, 1. What the duty of magistrates is, to take away the wicked, to use their power for the terrors of evil works and evil workers, not only to banish those that are vicious and profane from their presence, and forbid them the court, but so to frighten them and restrain them, that they may not spread the infection of their wickedness among their subjects. This is called *taking away the dross from the silver*, which is done by the force of fire. Wicked people are the dross of a nation, the scum of the country, and as such to be taken away: if men will not do it, God will, *Psal. cxix. 119*. If the wicked be taken away from before the king, if he abandon them and shew his detestation of their wicked courses, it will go far towards the disabling of them to do mischief. The reformation of the court will promote the reformation of the kingdom, *Psal. ci. 3, 8*.

2. What the advantage will be of their doing this duty, (1.) It will be the bettering of the subjects, they shall be made like silver refined, fit to be made vessels of honour. (2.) It will be the settling of the prince: *his throne shall be established in this righteousness*; for God will bless his government, the people will be pliable to it, and so it will become durable.

6. Put not forth thy self in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men. 7. For better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither: than that thou shouldst be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen.

Here we see, 1. That religion is so far from destroying good manners, that it teacheth us to behave our selves lowly and reverently

rently towards our betters, to keep our distance, and give place to those to whom it belongs: *Put not forth thy self rudely and carelessly in the king's presence, or in the presence of great men; do not compare with them, (so some understand it); do not vie with them in apparel, furniture, gardens, house-keeping, or retinue, for that is an affront to them, and will waste thine own estate.*

2. That religion teacheth us humility and self-denial, which is a better lesson than that of good manners. Deny thy self the place thou art entitled to, covet not to make a fair shew, nor aim at preferment, nor thrust thy self into the company of those that are above thee; be content in a low sphere, if that is it which God has allotted to thee; the reason he gives is because this is really the way to advancement, as our Saviour shews in a parable that seems to be borrowed from this, *Luke xiv. 9.* Not that we must therefore pretend modesty and humility, and make a stratagem of it for the courting of honour, but therefore we must really be modest and humble, for God will put honour on such, and so will men too. And it is better, more for a man's satisfaction and reputation to be advanced above his pretensions and expectations, than to be thrust down below them; *in the presence of the prince,* whom it was a great piece of honour to be admitted to the sight of, and a great piece of presumption to look upon without leave.

8. Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame. 9. Debate thy cause with thy neighbour *himself*; and discover not a secret to another: 10. Lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away.

Here is good counsel given about going to law:

1. Not to be hasty in bringing an action, before thou hast thy self considered it, and consulted with thy friends about it: *Go not forth hastily to strive,* do not send for a writ in a passion, or upon the first appearance of right on thy side, but weigh the matter deliberately, because we are apt to be partial in our own cause, consider the certainty of the expences, and the uncertainty of the success, how much care and vexation it will be the occasion of, and, after all, the cause may go against thee, and then sure thou wilt not *go forth hastily to strive.*

2. Nor before thou hast tried to end the matter amicably, *ver. 9. Debate thy cause with thy neighbour privately,* and, perhaps, you will understand one another better, and see that there is no occasion to go to law. In publick quarrels, the war that must at length end, it might better have been prevented by a treaty of peace, and a great deal of blood and treasure spared. It is so in private quarrels; sue not thy neighbour as a *heathen man* and a *publican*, until thou hast told him his fault between thee and him alone, and he has refused to refer the matter, or to come to an accommodation. Perhaps the matter in variance is a secret not fit to be divulged to any, much less to be brought upon the stage before the country, and therefore end it privately that it may not be discovered. *Reveal not the secret of another,* so some read it. Do not, in revenge, to disgrace thine adversary, disclose that which should be kept private, and which doth not at all belong to the cause.

Two reasons he gives why we should be thus cautious in going to law, 1. Because otherwise the cause will be in danger to go against us, and thou wilt *not know what to do* when the defendant has justified himself in what thou didst charge upon him, and made it out that thy complaint was frivolous and vexatious, and thou hadst no just cause of action, and so *put thee to shame,* non-suit thee, and force thee to pay costs. All which might have been prevented by a little consideration. 2. Because it will turn very much to our reproach, if we fall under the character of being litigious. Not only the defendant himself, *ver. 8.* but he that hears the cause tried, will *put thee to shame,* will expose thee as a man of no principle, and *thine infamy will not turn away,* thou wilt never retrieve thy reputation.

11. A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. 12. As an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reproof upon an obedient ear.

Solomon here shews how much it becomes a man,

1. To speak pertinently. *A word* upon the wheels that runs well, is well circumstanced, in proper time and place, instruction, advice, or comfort given seasonably, and in apt expressions, adapted to the case of the person spoken to, and agreeing with the character of the person speaking, is like golden balls resembling apples; or like true apples of a golden colour (golden rennets) or, perhaps, gilded, as sometimes we have gilded laurels, and those embossed in pictures of silver; or rather brought to table in a silver network basket, or in a silver box of that which we call Philligree-work, through which the golden apples might be seen. Doubtless it was some ornament of the table then well known. As that was very pleasing to the eye, so is *a word fitly spoken* to the ear.

2. Especially to give a reproof with discretion, and so as to make it acceptable. If it be well given, by a *wise reproof,* and well taken by an *obedient ear,* it is as an *ear-ring of gold,* and an *ornament of fine gold;* very graceful and well-becoming, both the reproof and the reproofed, both will have their praise, the reproof for giving it so prudently, and the reproofed for taking it so patiently, and making a good use of it. Others will commend them both, and they will have satisfaction in each other; he that gave the reproof is pleased that it had the desired effect, and he to whom it was given has reason to be thankful for it as a kindness. *That is well given,* we say, *that is well taken;* yet it doth not always prove that that is well taken which is well given. It were to wished that a *wise reproof* should always meet with an *obedient ear,* but often it is not so.

13. As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters.

See here, (1.) What ought to be the care of a servant, the meanest that is sent on an errand, and intrusted with any business, much more the greatest, the agent and ambassador of a prince, he ought to be *faithful to him that sends him,* and to see to it that he do not, by mistake, or with design, falsify his trust; and that he be in nothing, that lies in his power, wanting to his master's interest. Those that act as factors, by commission, ought to act as carefully as for themselves.

(2.) How much this will be the satisfaction of the master; it will *refresh his soul,* as much as ever the *cold of snow* (which in hot countries they preserve by art all the year round) was to the labourers in the harvest, that *bore the burthen and heat of the day.* And the more important the affair was, and the more fear of its miscarrying, the more acceptable is the messenger if he have managed it successfully and well. A faithful minister, Christ's messenger, should be thus acceptable to us, *Job xxxiii. 33.* however, he will be a *sweet savour to God,* 2 Cor. ii. 15.

14. Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift, is like clouds and winds without rain.

He may be said to boast of a false gift,

1. Who pretends to have received or given that which he never had, which he never gave; makes a noise of his great accomplishments, and his good services, but it is all false; he is not what he takes on him to be. Or,

2. Who promiseth what he will give, and what he will do, but performs nothing. Raiseth peoples expectations of the mighty things he will do for his country, for his friends, what noble legacies he will leave, but either he has not wherewithal, or he never designs it. Such a one is like the morning cloud that passeth away and disappoints those that looked for rain from it, to water the parched ground, *Jude 12. Clouds without water.*

15. By long forbearing is a prince perswaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone.

Two things are here recommended to us in dealing with others, as likely means to gain our point:

1. Patience, to bear a present heat without being put into a heat by it, and to wait for a fit opportunity to offer our reasons, and to give them time to consider them. By this means even a *prince* may be perswaded to do a thing which he seemed very averse to, much more a common person. That which is justice and reason now will be so another time, and therefore we need not urge them with violence now, but wait for a more convenient season.

2. Mildness, to speak without passion or provocation: *A soft tongue breaketh the bone,* i. e. it mollifies the roughest spirits, and overcomes those that are most morose; like lightning, which, they say, sometimes has broke the bone and yet not pierced the flesh. Gideon with a soft tongue pacified the Ephraimites, and Abigail turned away David's wrath. *Hard words,* we say, *break no bones,* and therefore we should bear them patiently, but, it seems, *soft words* do, and therefore we should, on all occasions, give them prudently.

16. Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.

Here, 1. We are allowed a sober and moderate use of the delights of sense: *Hast thou found honey?* it is not forbidden fruit to thee, as it was to Jonathan, thou mayst eat of it with thanksgiving to God, who, having created things grateful to our senses, has given us leave to make use of them. *Eat as much as is sufficient,* and no more; *Enough is as good as a feast.*

2. We are cautioned to take heed of excess: we must use all pleasures as we do honey, with a check upon our appetite, lest we take more than doth us good, and make our selves sick with it. We

We are most in danger of surfeiting upon that which is most sweet, and therefore those that fare sumptuously every day, have need to watch over themselves, *lest their hearts be at any time overcharged.* The pleasures of sense lose their sweetness by the excessive use of them, and become nauseous; as honey that turns sour in the stomach; it is therefore our interest, as well as our duty, to use them with sobriety.

17. Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbours house: lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee.

Here he instanceth in another pleasure which we must not take too much of, that of visiting our friends; the former for fear of surfeiting ourselves, this for fear of surfeiting our neighbour.

1. It is a piece of civility to visit our neighbours sometimes, to shew our respect to them, and concern for them, and to cultivate and improve mutual acquaintance and love, and that we may have both the satisfaction and advantage of their conversation.

2. It is wisdom as well as good manners not to be troublesome to our friends in our visiting of them. Not to visit too oft, nor stay too long, nor contrive to come at meal-time, nor make ourselves busy in the affairs of their families; hereby we make ourselves cheap, and mean, and burthensome. Thy neighbour that is thus plagued and haunted with thy visits will be *weary of thee, and hate thee*, and that will be the destruction of friendship which should have been the improvement of it. *Post tres sepe dies piscis vilescit & hospes.* Familiarity breeds contempt. *Nulli te facias nimis sedalem.* He that spungeth upon his friend loseth him. How much better friend then is God than any other friend; for we need not withdraw our foot from his house, the throne of his grace, *Prov. viii. 34.* the oftner we come to him the better, and the more welcome.

18. A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour, is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow.

Here, 1. The sin condemned, is *bearing false witness against our neighbour*, either in judgment, or in common conversation, contrary to the law of the ninth commandment.

2. That which it is here condemned for is the mischiefness of it; it is in its power to ruin not only mens reputation, but their lives, estates families, all that is dear to them; a false testimony is every thing that is dangerous, it is a *maul* or *club* to knock a man's brains out, a *flail*, that there is no fence against; it is a *sword* to wound near at hand, and a *sharp arrow* to wound at a distance; we have therefore need to pray, *deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips*, *Psal. cxx. 2.*

19. Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble, is like a broken tooth and a foot out of joint.

1. The confidence of an unfaithful man (so some read it) will be like a broken tooth; his policy, his power, his interest, all that which he trusted in to support him in his wickedness will fail him in time of trouble, *Psal. lii. 7.*

2. Confidence in an unfaithful man, so we read it, in a man that we thought trusty, and therefore depended on him, but proves otherwise; it proves not only unserviceable but painful and vexatious, like a broken tooth, or a foot out of joint, which when we put any stress upon, not only fails us, but makes us feel from it. Especially in time of trouble, when we must expect help from it; it is like a broken reed, *Isa. xxxvi. 6.* Confidence in a faithful God in time of trouble will not prove thus: On him we may rest, and in him dwell at ease.

20. As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre: so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart.

1. The absurdity here censured is *singing songs to a heavy heart.* Those that are in great sorrow are to be comforted by sympathizing with them, condoling them, and concurring in their lamentations, if we take that method, the *moving of our lips may assuage their grief*, *Job xvi. 5.* But we take a wrong course with them, if we think to relieve them by being merry with them, and endeavouring to make them merry, for that adds to their grief, to see their friends so little concerned for them, it puts them upon ripping up the causes of their grief, and aggravating them, and makes them harden themselves in sorrow against the assaults of mirth.

2. The absurdities this is compared to are *taking away a garment* from a man in cold weather, which makes him colder, or pouring *vinegar upon nitre*, which like water upon lime puts it into a ferment, so improper, so incongruous is it to sing pleasant songs to one that is of a sorrowful spirit. Some read it in a contrary sense; *As he that puts on a garment in cold weather* which warms the body, or as *vinegar upon nitre* which dissolves it, so he that sings songs of comfort to a person in sorrow, refresheth him, and dispels his grief.

21. If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat: and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:
22. For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.

By this it appears, that however the scribes and Pharisees had corrupted the law, not only the commandment of loving our brethren, but even that of loving our enemies was not only a new, but an old commandment; an old testament commandment, though our Saviour has given it us with the new enforcement of his own great example in loving us when we were enemies. Observe,

1. How we must express our love to our enemies, by the real offices of kindness, even those that are expensive to ourselves, and most acceptable to them; if they be *hungry* and *thirsty*, instead of pleasing thyself with their distress, and contriving how to cut off supplies from them, relieve them, as Elisha did the Syrians that came to apprehend him, *2 Kings vi. 22.*

2. What encouragement we have to do so. (1.) It will be a likely means to win upon them, and bring them over to be reconciled to us; we shall mollify them as the refiner melts the metal in the crucible, not only by putting it over the fire, but by heaping coals of fire upon it. The way to turn an enemy into a friend, is to carry it friendly to him. Or, if it do not gain him it will aggravate his sin and punishment, and heap the burning coals of God's wrath upon his head; as rejoicing in his calamity may be an occasion of God's turning his wrath from him, *chap. xxiv. 17.* (2.) However we shall be no losers by our self-denial; whether he relent towards thee or no, *the Lord shall reward thee*; he shall forgive thee who thus shewest thyself to be of a forgiving spirit: He shall provide for thee when thou art in distress, though thou hast been evil and ungrateful, as thou dost for thine enemy. However, it shall be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, when kindnesses done to our enemies shall be remembered as well as those shewn to God's friends.

23. The north-wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.

Here see, 1. How we must discourage sin, and witness against it, and particularly the sin of slandering and backbiting, we must frown upon it, and by giving it an angry countenance, endeavour to put it out of countenance: Slanders would not be so readily spoken as they are, if they were not readily heard; but good manners would silence the slanderer, if he saw that his tales displeased the company. We would shew ourselves uneasy, if we heard a dear friend, whom we value, evil spoken of; the same dislike we should shew of evil-speaking in general. If we cannot otherwise reprove, we may do it by our looks.

2. The good effect which this might probably have; who knows but it may silence and drive away a *backbiting tongue*? Sin, if it be countenanced becomes daring, but if it receive any check, it is so conscious of its own shame, that it becomes sneaking, and this particularly; for many abuse those they speak of, only in hopes to curry favour with those they speak to.

24. It is better to dwell in a corner of the house-top, than with a brawling woman, and in a wide house.

This is the same with what he had said, *chap. xxi. 9.*

Observe, 1. How those are to be pitied that are unequally yoked, especially with such as are brawling and contentious, whether husband or wife; for it is equally true of both. It is better to be alone, than to be joined to one, who instead of being a meet help, is a great hindrance to the comfort of life.

2. How those may sometimes be envied that live in solitude, as they want the comfort of society, so they are free from the vexation of it. And as there are cases which give occasion to say, blessed is the womb that has not born, so there are which give occasion to say, blessed is the man never married, but lies like a servant in a corner of the house-top.

25. As cold waters to a thirsty soul: so is good news from a far country.

See here, 1. How natural it is to us to desire to hear good news from our friends, and concerning our affairs at a distance. It is sometimes with impatience that we expect to hear from abroad, our souls thirst after it; but we should check the inordinacy of that desire, if it be bad news it will come too soon, if good, it will be welcome at any time.

2. How acceptable such good news will be when it doth come, as refreshing as cold water to one that is thirsty. Solomon himself had much trading abroad, as well as correspondence by his embassadours with foreign courts, and how pleasant it was to hear of the good success of his negotiations abroad, he well knew by experience. Heaven is a country afar off, how refreshing is it to hear good news from thence, both in the everlasting gospel, which

signifies glad tidings, and in the witness of the Spirit with our spirits that we are God's children.

26. A righteous man falling down before the wicked, is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring.

It is here represented as a very lamentable thing, and a publick grievance, and of ill consequence to many, like the muddying of a fountain, and the corrupting of a spring, for the righteous to fall down before the wicked, that is,

1. For the righteous to fall into sin in the sight of the wicked, for them to do any thing unbecoming their profession, which is told in Gath, and published in the streets of Askelon, and in which the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, for them that have been in reputation for wisdom and honour to fall from their excellency, this troubles the fountains, by grieving some, and corrupts the springs by infecting others, and emboldening them to do likewise.

2. For the righteous to be oppressed, and run down, and trampled upon by the violence or subtilty of evil men, to be displaced, and thrust into obscurity, this is the troubling of the fountains of justice, and corrupting the very springs of government, chap. xxviii. 12, 28,—xxix. 2.

3. For the righteous to be cowardly, to sneak and truckle to the wicked, to be afraid of opposing his wickedness, and basely to yield to him, this is a reflection upon religion, a discouragement to good men, and strengthens the hands of sinners in their sins, and so is like a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring.

27. It is not good to eat much honey: so for men to search their own glory, is not glory.

Two things we must be graciously dead to.

1. To the pleasures of sense, for it is not good to eat much honey, though it please the taste, and if eaten with moderation is very wholesome; yet if eaten to excess it becomes nauseous, breeds choler, and is the occasion of many diseases; which is true of all the delights of the children of men, they will surfeit, but never satisfy, and they are dangerous to those that allow themselves the liberal use of them.

2. To the praise of men. We must not be greedy of that no more than of pleasure, because, for men to search their own glory, to court applause, and covet to make themselves popular, it is not their glory to do so, but their shame, every one will laugh at them for it; and the glory which is so courted, when it is got is not glory, it is really no true honour to a man.

Some give another sense of this verse; to eat much honey is not good, but to search into glorious and excellent things, is a great commendation, it is true glory; we cannot therein offend by excess. Others thus; as honey, though pleasant to the taste, if used immoderately oppresseth the stomach, so an over-curious search into things sublime and glorious, though pleasant to us, if we pry too far, will overwhelm our capacities with a greater glory and lustre than they can bear. Or thus; you may be surfeited with eating too much honey, but the last of glory, of their glory, the glory of the blessed is glory, it will be ever fresh, and never pall the appetite.

28. He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.

Here is, 1. The good character of a wise and virtuous man implied; he is one that hath rule over his own spirit, he maintains the government of himself, and of his own appetites and passions, and doth not suffer them to rebel against reason and conscience. He has the rule of his own thoughts, his desires, his inclinations, his resentments, and keeps them all in good order.

2. The bad case of a vicious man, that has not this rule over his own spirit, that when temptations to excess in eating or drinking are before him, has no government of himself, when he is provoked, breaks out into exorbitant passions, such a one is like a city that is broken down, and without walls, all that is good goes out, and forsakes him, all that is evil breaks in upon him, he lies exposed to all the temptations of Satan, and becomes an easy prey to that enemy; he is also liable to many troubles and vexations; it is likewise as much a reproach to him as it is to a city, to have its walls ruined, Neh. i. 3.

C H A P XXVI.

1. AS snow in summer, and as rain in harvest; so honour is not seemly for a fool.

Note, 1. It is too common a thing for honour to be given to fools, that are utterly unworthy of it, and unfit for it; ill men that have neither wit nor grace are sometimes preferred by princes, and applauded and cried up by the people: Folly is set in great dignity, as Solomon observed, Eccl. x. 6.

2. It is very absurd and unbecoming when it is so. It is as incongruous as snow in summer, and as great a disorder in the com-

monwealth as that is in the course of nature, and in the seasons of the year; nay, it is as injurious as rain in harvest, which hinders the labourers, and spoils the fruits of the earth when they are ready to be gathered. When bad men are in power, they commonly abuse their power, in discouraging virtue, and giving countenance to wickedness, for want of wisdom to discern it, and grace to detest it.

2. As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come.

Here is, 1. The folly of passion; it makes men scatter causeless curses; wishing ill to others upon presumption that they are ill, and have done ill, when either they mistake the person, or misunderstand the fact; or call evil good, and good evil. Give honour to a fool, and he thunders out his anathema's against all that he has any disgust to, right or wrong. Great men that are wicked think they have a privilege to keep those about them in awe, by cursing them, and swearing at them; which yet is an expression of the most impotent malice, and shews their weakness as much as their wickedness.

2. The safety of innocence. He that is cursed without cause, whether by furious imprecations, or solemn anathema's, the curse shall do him no more harm than the bird that flies over his head, than Goliath's curses did to David, 1 Sam. xvii. 43. It will fly away like the sparrow, or the wild dove, that go no body knows whither, till they return to their proper place, as the curse will at length return upon the head of him that uttered it.

3. A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fools back.

Here, 1. Wicked men are compared to the horse and the ass, so brutish are they, so unreasonable, so unruly, and not to be governed but by force and fear; so low has sin sunk men, so much below themselves! Man indeed is born like the wild ass's colt, but, as some, by the grace of God, are changed, and become rational, so others, by custom in sin, are hardened, and become more and more sottish, as the horse and the mule, Psalm xxxii. 9.

2. Direction is given to use them accordingly: Princes, instead of giving honour to a fool, ver. 1. must put disgrace upon him; instead of putting power into his hand, must exercise power over him. A horse unbroken needs a whip for correction, and an ass a bridle for direction, and to check him when he would turn out of the way; so a vicious man that will not be under the conduct and restraint of religion and reason, ought to be whipt and bridled, to be rebuked severely, and made to smart for what he has done amiss, and to be restrained from offending any more.

4. Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. 5. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.

See here the noble security of the scripture stile, which seems to contradict it self, but really doth not. Wise men have need to be directed how to deal with fools; and they have never more need of wisdom than in dealing with such, to know when to keep silence, and when to speak, for there may be a time for both.

1. In some cases a wise man will not set his wit to that of a fool, so far as to answer him according to his folly. If he boast of himself, do not answer him by boasting of thy self: If he rail, and talk passionately, do not thou rail, and talk passionately too: If he tell one great lie, do not thou tell another to match it: If he calumniate thy friends, do not thou calumniate his: If he banter, do not answer him in his own language; lest thou be like him; even thou, who knowest better things; who hast more sense, and hast been better taught.

2. Yet in other cases a wise man will use his wisdom for the conviction of a fool, and when, by taking notice of what he saith, there may be hopes of doing good, or at least preventing further mischief, either to himself or others. If thou have reason to think that thy silence will be deemed an evidence of the weakness of thy cause, or of thine own weakness, in such a case, answer him, and let it be an answer ad hominem, beat him at his own weapons, and that will be an answer ad rem, or as good as one. If he offer any thing that looks like an argument, answer that, and suit thine answer to his case. If he think, because thou dost not answer him, what he saith is unanswerable, then give him an answer, lest he be wise in his own conceit, and boast of a victory: For, Luke vii. 35. wisdom's children must justify her.

6. He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool, cutteth off the feet, and drinketh damage. 7. The legs of the lame are not equal: so is a parable in the mouth of fools. 8. As he that bindeth a stone in a sling: so is he that giveth honour to a fool. 9. As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, so is a parable in the mouth of fools.

To recommend wisdom to us, and to quicken us to the diligent use of all the means for the getting of wisdom, Solomon here shews, that fools are fit for nothing; foolish men that will never think and design at all, and vicious men that will never think and design well.

1. They are not fit to be intrusted with any business, not fit to go on an errand, *ver. 6.* *He that doth but send a message by the hand of a fool,* of a careless, heedless person, one that is so full of his jests, and so given to his pleasures, that he cannot apply his mind to any thing that is serious, he will find his message misunderstood, the one half of it forgotten, the rest awkwardly delivered, and so many blunders made about it, that he had as good have *cut off his legs*, i. e. never have sent him; nay, he will *drink damage*, i. e. it will be very much to his prejudice to have employed such a one, who, instead of bringing him a good account of his affairs, will abuse him, and put a trick upon him; for, in Solomon's language, a knave and a fool are of the same signification. It will turn much to a man's disgrace to make use of the service of a fool, for people will be apt to judge of the master by his messenger.

2. They are not fit to have any honour put upon them; he had said, *ver. 1.* that *honour is not seemly for a fool*; here he shews, that it is lost, and thrown away upon him; as if a man should throw a precious stone, or a stone fit to be used in weighing, into a heap of common stones, where it would be buried, and of no use; it is as absurd, as if a man should *dress up a stone in purple*, so others; nay, it is dangerous, it is like *a stone bound in a sling*, with which a man will be likely to do hurt; to *give honour to a fool*, is to put a sword in a madman's hand, with which we know not what mischief he may do, even to those that put it into his hand.

3. They are not fit to deliver wise sayings, nor should they undertake to handle any matter of weight, though they should be instructed concerning it, and be able to say something to it. Wise sayings, as a foolish man delivers them, and applies them, in such a manner that one may know he doth not rightly understand them, lose their excellency and usefulness: *A parable in the mouth of fools* ceases to be a parable, and becomes a jest. If a man that lives a wicked life, yet speaks religiously, and takes God's covenant into his mouth,

(1.) He doth shame himself and his profession: As *the legs of the lame are not equal*, by reason of which their going is indecent, so indecent is it for a fool to pretend to speak apophthegms, and give advice; and for a man to talk devoutly, whose conversation is a constant contradiction to his talk, and gives him the lie. His good words raise him up, but then his ill life takes him down, and so his *legs are not equal*. "A wise saying (saith bishop Patrick) doth as ill become a fool, as dancing doth a cripple; for as his lameness never so much appears as when he would seem nimble, so the others folly is never so ridiculous as when he would seem wise." As therefore it is best for a lame man to keep his seat, so it is best for a silly man, and an ill man, to hold his tongue.

(2.) He doth but do mischief with it to himself and others, as a drunkard doth with a thorn, or any other sharp thing which he takes in his hand, with which he tears himself and those about him, because he knows not how to manage it. Those that talk well, and do not live well, their good words will aggravate their own condemnation, and others will be hardened by their inconsistency with themselves. Some give this sense of it; the sharpest saying, by which a sinner, one would think, should be pricked to the heart, doth make no more impression upon a fool, no, though it come out of his own mouth, than the scratch of a thorn doth upon the hand of a man when he is drunk, who then feels it not, nor complains of it, *chap. xxiii. 35.*

10. The great God that formed all things, both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors.

Our translation gives this verse a different reading in the text, and in the margin; and accordingly it speaks, either,

1. The equity of a good God. The Master, or Lord, (so Rab signifies) or, as we read it, *The great God that formed all things* at first, and still governs them in infinite wisdom, renders to every man according to his work: He *rewards the fool*, who sinned through ignorance, *who knew not his Lord's will, with few stripes*; and he *rewards the transgressor*, that sins presumptuously, and with a high hand; that *knew his Lord's will, and would not do it, he shall be beaten with many stripes*. Some understand it of the goodness of God's common providence, even to *fools and transgressors*, on whom he causeth his sun to shine, and his rain to fall. Or it speaks,

2. The iniquity of an ill prince; so the margin reads it; *A great man grieveth all*; and he *hireth the fool, he hireth also the transgressors*. When a wicked man gets power in his hand, by himself, and by the fools and knaves he employs under him; that he hires, and chooseth to make use of; he grieves all that are under him, and is vexatious to them. We should therefore *pray for kings, and all in authority*, that under them our lives may be quiet and peaceable.

11. As a dog returneth to his vomit; so a fool returneth to his folly.

See here, 1. What an abominable thing sin is, and how hateful sometimes it is made to appear, even to the sinner himself. When his conscience is convinced, or he feels smart from his sin, he is sick of it, and vomits it up; he seems then to detest it, and to be willing to part with it. It is in it self, and first or last will be to the sinner, more loathsome than the vomit of a dog, *Psal. xxxvi. 2.*

2. How apt sinners are to relapse into it notwithstanding; as the dog, after he has gained ease by vomiting that which burthened his stomach, yet goes and licks it up again, so sinners that have been convinced only, and not converted, return to sin again, forgetting how sick it made them. The apostle applies this proverb to those that *have known the way of righteousness*, but are *turned from it*, *2 Pet. ii. 22.* but God will *spew them out of his mouth*, *Rev. iii. 16.*

12. Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him.

Here is, 1. A spiritual disease supposed, and that is self-conceit. *Seest thou a man?* yes, we see many a one, *wise in his own conceit*; that has some little sense, but is proud of it, thinks it much more than it is, more than any of his neighbours have, and enough, so that he needs no more; has such a conceit of his own abilities, as makes him opinionative, dogmatical, and censorious; and all the use he makes of his knowledge, is, that it puffs him up. Or, if by a wise man, we understand a religious man, it speaks the character of those, who, making some shew of religion, conclude their spiritual state to be good, when really it is very bad, like *Ladicea*, *Rev. iii. 17.*

2. The danger of this disease, it is in a manner desperate, *there is more hope of a fool*, that knows, and owns himself to be so, *than of such a one*. Solomon was not only a wise man himself, but a teacher of wisdom, and this observation he made upon his pupils, that he found his work most difficult, and least successful, with those that had a good opinion of themselves, and were not sensible that they needed instruction. Therefore he that *seems to himself to be wise*, must *become a fool that he may be wise*, *1 Cor. iii. 18.* There is more hopes of a publican than of a proud Pharisee, *Matt. xxi. 32.* Many are hindered from being truly wise and religious, by a false and groundless conceit that they are so, *John ix. 40, 41.*

13. The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way, a lion is in the streets.

When a man talks foolishly, we say, he talks idly, for none betray their folly more than those who are idle, and go about to excuse themselves in their idleness. As mens folly makes them slothful, so their slothfulness makes them foolish. Observe,

1. What the slothful man really dreads; he dreads *the way, the streets*, the place where work is to be done, and a journey to be gone; he hates business, hates every thing that requires care and labour.

2. What he dreams of, and pretends to dread; *a lion in the way*. When he is pressed to be diligent, either in his worldly affairs, or in the business of religion, this is his excuse (and a sorry excuse it is, as bad as none) *There is a lion in the way*, some insuperable difficulty or danger which he cannot pretend to grapple with. Lions use to be in woods, in deserts; and in the day-time, when man has business to do, they are in their dens, *Psal. civ. 22, 23.* But the sluggard fancies, or rather pretends to fancy, *a lion in the streets*, whereas the lion is only in his own fancy, nor is he so fierce as he is painted. Note, It is a foolish thing to frighten our selves from real duties by fancied difficulties, *Ecc. xi. 4.*

14. As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed.

Having seen the slothful man in fear of his work, here we find him in love with his ease; he lies in his bed on one side till he is weary of that, and then turns to the other, but still in his bed, when it is far in the day, and work is to be done; as the door is moved, but not removed; and so his business is neglected, and his opportunities let slip. See the sluggard's character:

1. He is one that doth not care to get out of his bed, but seems to be hung upon it, *as the door upon his hinges*. Bodily ease, too much consulted, is the sad occasion of many a spiritual disease. They that love sleep, will prove in the end to have loved death.

2. He doth not care to get forward with his business, in that he stirs to and fro a little, but to no purpose, he is where he was. Slothful professors turn in profession like *the door upon the hinges*. The world and the flesh are the two hinges on which they are hung, and though they move in a course of external services, are got into a road of duties, and tread around in them like the horse in the mill, yet they get no good, they get no ground, they are never the nearer heaven: Sinners unchanged, saints unimproved.

15. The slothful hideth his hand in *his* bosom, it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth.

The sluggard is now, with much ado, got out of his bed, but he might as good have lain there still for any thing he is likely to bring to pass in his work, so awkwardly doth he go about it. Observe,

1. The pretence he makes for his slothfulness: He *hides his hand in his bosom*, for fear of cold; next to his warm bed, is his warm bosom; or, pretending that he is lame, as some do that make a trade of begging; something ails his hand, he would have it thought that it is blistered with yesterday's hard work; or, it speaks in general his aversion to business; he has tried, and his hands are not used to labour, and therefore he hugs himself in his own ease, and cares for no body. Note, It is common for those that will not do their duty, to pretend they cannot. *I cannot dig*, Luke xvi. 3.

2. The prejudice he sustains by his slothfulness; he himself is the loser by it, for he starves himself; *it grieves him to bring his hand to his mouth*, i. e. he cannot find in his heart to feed himself, but dreads it, as a mighty toil to lift his hand to his head. It is an elegant hyperbole, aggravating his sin, that he cannot endure to take the least pains, no, not for the greatest profit, and shewing how his sin is his punishment. Those that are slothful in the business of religion, will not be at the pains to feed their own souls with the word of God, the bread of life, nor to fetch in promised blessings by prayer, though they might have them for the fetching.

16. The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit, than seven men that can render a reason.

Observe, 1. The high opinion which the sluggard has of himself, notwithstanding the gross absurdity and folly of his slothfulness. He thinks himself *wiser than seven men*, than seven wise men, for they are such as *can render a reason*. It is the wisdom of a man, to be able to *render a reason*; of a good man, to be able to give *a reason of the hope that is in him*, 1 Pet. iii. 15. What we do we should be able to *render a reason* for, though, perhaps, we may not have wit enough to shew the fallacy of every objection against it. He that takes pains in religion can render a good reason for it; he knows he is working for a good master, and that *his labour shall not be in vain*. But the sluggard thinks himself *wiser than seven* such; for let seven such persuade him to be diligent, with all the reasons they can render for it, it is to no purpose, his own wilfulness, he thinks, answer enough to them and all their reasons.

2. The reference that this has to his slothfulness. It is the *sluggard*, above all men, that is thus self-conceited; for, 1. His good opinion of himself is the cause of his slothfulness; therefore he will not take pains to get wisdom, because he thinks he is wise enough already. A conceit of the sufficiency of our attainments is a great enemy to our improvement. 2. His slothfulness is the cause of his good opinion of himself. If he would but take pains to examine himself, and compare himself with the laws of wisdom, he would have other thoughts of himself. Indulged slothfulness is at the bottom of prevailing self-conceitedness. Nay, 3. So wretchedly befotted is he, that he takes his slothfulness to be his wisdom; he thinks it is his wisdom to make much of himself, and take all the ease he can get, and do no more in religion than he needs must, to avoid suffering; to sit still and see what other people do, that he may have the pleasure of finding fault with them. Of such sluggards who are proud of that which is their shame there is little hope, *ver. 12*.

17. He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears.

1. That which is here condemned is *meddling with strife that belongs not to us*. If we must not be hasty to strive in our own cause, *chap. xv. 8*. much less in other peoples, especially theirs that we are no way related to, or concerned in, but light on accidentally as we pass by. If we can be instrumental to make peace between those that are at variance, we must do it, though we should thereby get the ill will of both sides, at least while they are in their heat; but to make our selves busy in other mens matters, and parties in other mens quarrels, is not only to court our own trouble, but to thrust our selves into temptation. *Who made me a judge?* Let them end it, as they began it, between themselves.

2. Therefore we are cautioned against it, because of the danger it exposeth us to; it is like taking a snarling cur *by the ears*, that will snap at you, and bite you; you had better have let him alone, for you cannot get clear of him when you would, and must thank your selves if you come off with a wound and dishonour. He that has got a dog *by the ears*, if he let him go he flies at him, if he keeps his hold, he has his hands full, and can do nothing else. Let every one *with quietness work, and mind his own business*, and not with unquietness quarrel, and meddle with other peoples business.

18. As a mad man who casteth fire-brands, arrows and death: 19. So is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and faith, Am not I in sport?

See here, 1. How mischievous those are that make no conscience of *deceiving their neighbours*, they are *as mad men that cast fire-brands, arrows, and death*; so much hurt may they do by their deceits: They value themselves upon it as politick, cunning men, but really they are *as mad men*. There is not a greater madness in the world than a wilful sin. It is not only the passionate, furious man, but the malicious, deceitful man that is a *mad man*; he doth in effect *cast fire-brands, arrows, and death*; he doth more mischief than he can imagine. Fraud and falsehood burn like fire-brands, kill, even at a distance, like arrows.

2. See how frivolous the excuse is which men commonly make for the mischief they do, that they did it in jest; with this they think to turn it off when they are reprov'd for it, *Am not I in sport?* But it will prove dangerous playing with fire, and jesting with edge-tools. Not that those are to be commended who are captious, and can take no jest, they that themselves are *wise must suffer fools*, 2 Cor. xi. 19, 20. but those are certainly to be condemned, who are any way abusive to their neighbours, impose upon their credulity, cheat them in their bargains with them, tell lies to them, or tell lies of them, give them ill language, or put them in an ill name, and then think to excuse it by saying they did but *jest*; *am not I in sport?* He that sins in jest must repent in earnest, or his sin will be his ruin. Truth is too valuable a thing to be sold for a jest, and so is the reputation of our neighbour. By lying and slandering in jest, men learn themselves, and teach others to lie and slander in earnest; and a false report raised in mirth, may be spread in malice; and if a man may tell a lie to make himself merry, why not to make himself rich, and so *truth quite perisheth*, and men *teach their tongues to tell lies*, Jer. ix. 5. If men would consider that a lie comes from the devil, and brings to hell-fire, sure that would spoil the sport of it; it is *casting arrows and death* to themselves.

20. Where no wood is, *there* the fire goeth out: so where *there is* no tale-bearer, the strife ceaseth. 21. As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife. 22. The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

Contention is as a fire, it heats the spirit, burns up all that is good, and puts families and societies into a flame: Now here we are told how that fire is commonly kindled and kept burning, that we may avoid the occasions of strife, and so prevent the mischievous consequences of it. If then we would keep the peace,

1. We must not give ear to *tale-bearers*, for they feed the fire of contention with fuel; nay, they spread it with combustible matter; the tales they carry are fire-balls; they that by insinuating base characters, revealing secrets, and misrepresenting words and actions, do what they can to make relations, friends and neighbours, jealous one of another, to alienate them one from another, and sow discord among them, are to be banished out of families, and all societies, and then strife will as surely cease, as the fire will go out when it has no fuel; the contenders will better understand one another, and come to a better temper; old stories will soon be forgotten, when there are no new ones told to keep up the remembrance of them, and both sides will see how they have been imposed upon by a common enemy. Whisperers and backbiters are incendiaries not to be suffered.

To illustrate this, he repeats, *ver. 22*. what he had said before, *chap. xviii. 8*. that *the words of a tale-bearer are as wounds*, deep and dangerous wounds; wounds in the vitals; they wound the reputation of him who is belied, and, perhaps, the wound proves incurable, and even the plaister of a recantation (which yet can seldom be obtained) may not prove wide enough for it; they wound the love and charity which he to whom they are spoke ought to have for his neighbour, and give a fatal stab to friendship, and christian fellowship. We must therefore not only not be tale-bearers our selves at any time, nor ever do any ill offices, but should not give the least countenance to those that are.

2. We must not associate with peevish, passionate people, that are exceptionous, and apt to put the worst constructions upon every thing; that pick quarrels upon the least occasion, and are quick and high, and hot in resenting affronts, these are *contentious men that kindle strife*, *ver. 21*. The less we have to do with such the better, for it will be very hard not to quarrel with those that are quarrellsome.

23. Burning lips, and a wicked heart, are like a pot-herd covered with silver dross.

This may be meant either,

1. Of a *wicked heart* shewing it self in *burning lips*, i. e. furious, passionate, outrageous words, burning in malice, and persecuting

ting those to whom, or of whom they are spoken; ill words, and ill will, agree as well together as a *potsherd*, and the *drofs of silver*, which, now the pot is broken, and the drofs separated from the silver, are fit to be thrown together to the dunghil.

2. Or of a *wicked heart* disguising it self with *burning lips*, i. e. burning with the professions of love and friendship, and even persecuting a man with flatteries, this is *like a potsherd covered with the scum or drofs of silver*, with which one that is weak may be imposed upon, as if it were of some value, but a wise man is soon aware of the cheat of. This sense agrees with the following verses.

24. He that hateth, dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him. 25. When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart. 26. *Whose* hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be shewed before the whole congregation.

There is cause to complain, not only of the want of sincerity in mens profession of friendship, and that they do not love so well as they pretend, nor will serve their friends so much as they promise, but, which is much worse, of wicked designs in the profession of friendship, and the making of it subservient to the most malicious intentions. This is here spoken of as a common thing, *ver.* 24. *He that hates* his neighbour, and is contriving to do him a mischief, yet *dissembleth with his lips*, professeth to have a respect for him, and to be ready to serve him, talks friendly with him, as Cain with Abel, asks, *Art thou in health, my brother?* as Joab to Amasa, that his malice may not be suspected, and guarded against, and so he may have the fairer opportunity to execute the purposes of it. He *lays up deceit within him*, i. e. he keeps in his mind the mischief he intends to do his neighbour, till he catcheth him at an advantage. This is malice which has no less of the subtilty than it has of the venom of the old serpent in it.

Now as to this matter we are here cautioned,

1. Not to be so foolish as to suffer our selves to be imposed upon by the pretensions of friendship. Remember to distrust *when* a man *speaks fair*, be not too forward to *believe him*, unless you know him well, for it is possible *there* may be *seven abominations in his heart*, a great many projects of mischief against you, which he is labouring so industriously to conceal with his fair speech. Satan is an enemy that hates us, and yet in his temptations speaks fair, as he did to Eve, but it is madness to give credit to him, for *there are seven abominations in his heart, seven other spirits* doth one unclean spirit bring *more wicked than himself*.

2. Not to be so wicked as to impose upon any with a profession of friendship; for though the fraud may be carried on plausibly a while, it will be brought to light, *ver.* 26. *He whose hatred is covered by deceit*, one time or other will be discovered, and his *wickedness shewed*, to his shame and confusion, *before the whole congregation*; and nothing will do more to make a man odious to all companies. Love (saith one) is the best armour, but the worst cloke, and will serve dissemblers as the disguise which Ahab put on, and perished in.

27. *Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him.*

See here, 1. What pains men take to do mischief to others: As they put a force upon themselves by concealing it with a profession of friendship, so they put themselves to a great deal of labour to bring it about; it is *digging a pit*, it is *rolling a stone*, hard work; and yet men will not stick at it to gratify their passion and revenge.

2. What preparation they hereby make of mischief to themselves; their violent dealing will return upon their own heads; they shall themselves *fall into the pit they digged*, and the stone they rolled *will return upon them*, Psalm vii. 15, 16. ix. 15, 16. The righteous God will take the wise, not only in their own craftiness, but in their own cruelty. It is the plotter's doom. Haman is hanged on a gallows of his own preparing: *Nec lex est justior ulla quam necis artifices arte perire sua.*

28. A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it, and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.

There are two sorts of lies equally detestable.

1. A slanderous lie, which avowedly hates those that it is spoken of. *A lying tongue hates those that are afflicted by it*; therefore afflicts them by calumnies and reproaches, because it hates them, and can thus smite them secretly where they are without defence; and therefore hates them, because it has afflicted them, and made them its enemies. The mischief of this is open and obvious; it afflicts, it hates, and owns it, and every body sees it.

2. A flattering lie, which secretly *works the ruin* of those it is spoken to. In the former the mischief is plain, and men guard against it as well as they can, but in this it is little suspected, and men betray themselves by being credulous of their own praises, and the compliments that are passed upon them. A wise man therefore

will be more afraid of a flatterer that kisses and kills, than of a slanderer that proclaims war.

C H A P. XXVII.

1. **B**OAST not thy self of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth:

Here is, 1. A good caution against presuming upon time to come. *Boast not thy self*, no, not of to morrow, much less of many days or years to come. This doth not forbid preparing for to morrow, but presuming upon to morrow; we must not promise our selves the continuance of our lives and comforts till to morrow, but speak of it with submission to the will of God, and as those that with good reason are kept at uncertainty about it. We must not *take thought for the morrow*, Matt. vi. 34. but we must cast our care concerning it upon God. See James iv. 13, 14, 15. We must not put off the great work of conversion, that one thing needful, till to morrow, as if we were sure of it, but to day, while it is called to day, hear God's voice.

2. A good consideration, upon which this caution is grounded; we *know not what a day may bring forth*; not what event may be in the teeming womb of time; it is secret till it is born, Eccl. xi. 5. A little time may produce considerable changes, and such as we little think of; we *know not what the present day may bring forth*, the evening must commend it. *Nescis quid serus vespere vehat.* God has wisely kept us in the dark concerning future events, and reserved to himself the knowledge of them, as a flower of the crown, that he may train us up in a dependence upon himself, and a continued readiness for every event, Acts i. 7.

2. Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.

Note, 1. We must do that which is commendable, for which even strangers may praise us. Our *light must shine before men*, and we must do good works that may be seen, though we must not do them on purpose that they may be seen. Let our own works be such as will praise us, even in the gates, Phil. iv. 8.

2. When we have done it we must not commend our selves, for that is an evidence of pride, and folly, and self-love, and a great lessening to a man's reputation: Every one will be forward to run him down that cries himself up. There may be a just occasion for us to vindicate our selves, but it doth not become us to applaud our selves. *Proprio laus sordet in ore.*

3. A stone is heavy, and the sand weighty: but a fool's wrath is heavier than them both. 4. Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?

These two verses shew the intolerable mischief,

1. Of an ungoverned passion. The wrath of a fool, that, when he is provoked, cares not what he saith and doth, is more grievous than a great stone, or a load of sand. It lies heavy upon himself: Those that have no command of their passions, do themselves even sink under the load of them. It lies heavy upon those he is enraged at, whom, in his fury, he will be in danger of doing some mischief or other to. It is therefore our wisdom not to give provocation to a fool, but, if he be in a passion, to get out of his way.

2. Of a rooted malice; which is as much worse than the former, as coals of juniper are than a fire of thorns. *Wrath* (it is true) *is cruel*, and doth many a barbarous thing, and *anger is outrageous*, but a secret enmity at the person of another, an envy at his prosperity, and a desire of revenge for some injury or affront, is much more mischievous; one may avoid a sudden heat, as David escaped Saul's javelin, but when it grows, as Saul's did, to a settled envy, there is no standing before it; it will pursue, it will overtake. He that grieves at the good of another, will be still contriving to do him hurt, and keep his anger for ever.

5. Open rebuke is better than secret love. 6. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

Note, 1. It is good for us to be reproved and told of our faults by our friends. If true love in the heart has but zeal and courage enough to shew it self in dealing plainly with our friends, and reproving them for what they say and do amiss, this is really better, not only than secret hatred, as Lev. xix. 17. but than secret love; that love to our neighbours which doth not shew it self in this good fruit, which compliments them in their sins, to the prejudice of their souls. *Faithful are the reproofs of a friend*, though for the present they are painful as wounds. It is a sign our friends are faithful indeed, if, in love to our souls, they will not suffer sin upon us, nor let us alone in it. The physician's care is to cure the patient's disease, not to please his palate.

2. It is dangerous to be caressed and flattered by an enemy, whose kisses are deceitful; we can take no pleasure in them, because we

can put no confidence in them. Joab's kiss and Judas's were deceitful, and therefore we have need to stand upon our guard, that we be not deluded by them; they are to be deprecated: So some read it; *The Lord deliver us from an enemy's kisses; from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue.*

7. The full soul lotheth an honey-comb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.

Solomon here, as often in this book, shews, that the poor have in some respects the advantage of the rich; for,

1. They have a better relish of their enjoyments than the rich have; hunger is the best sauce: Coarse fare, with a good appetite to it, has a sensible pleasantness in it, which they are strangers to whose hearts are *overcharged with surfeiting*. They that fare sumptuously every day, nauseate even delicate food, as the Israelites did the quails; whereas they that have no more but their necessary food, though it be such as *the full soul* would call *bitter*, to them it is *sweet*; they eat it with pleasure, digest it, and are refreshed by it.

2. They are more thankful for their enjoyments. *The hungry* will bless God for bread and water, while those that are *full* think the greatest dainties and varieties scarce worth giving thanks for. The virgin Mary seems to refer to this, when she saith, *Luke i. 53.* that *the hungry*, who know how to value God's blessings, are *filled with good things*, but *the rich*, that despise them, are justly *sent empty away*.

8. As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place.

Note, 1. There are many that do not know when they are well, but are uneasy with their present condition, and given to change. God, in his providence, hath appointed them a place fit for them, and has made it comfortable to them, but they affect unsettledness, they love to wander, they are glad of a pretence to go abroad, and do not care for staying long at a place; they needlessly absent themselves from their own work and care, and meddle with that which belongs not to them.

2. Those that thus desert the post assigned them, are like *a bird that wanders from her nest*; it is an instance of their folly, they are like a silly bird, they are always wavering, like the wandering bird that hops from bough to bough, and rests no where. It is unsafe; the bird that wanders is exposed; a man's place is his castle, he that quits it makes himself an easy prey to the fowler; when the bird wanders from her nest, the eggs and young ones there are neglected. They that love to be abroad, leave their work at home undone. *Let every man therefore in the calling wherein he is called therein abide, therein abide with God.*

9. Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel. 10. Thine own friend and thy father's friend forsake not; neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity: for better is a neighbour that is near, than a brother far off.

Here is, 1. A charge given to be faithful and constant to our friends, our old friends, to keep up an intimacy with them, and to be ready to do them all the good offices that lie in our power. It is good to have a friend, a bosom-friend, whom we can be free with, and with whom we may communicate counsels; it is not necessary that this friend should be a relation, or any way akin to us; though it is happiest, when, among those that are so, we find one fit to make a friend of; Peter and Andrew were brethren, so were James and John; yet Solomon frequently distinguisheth between a friend and a brother: But it is adviseable to choose a friend among our neighbours that live near us, that acquaintance may be kept up, and kindnesses the more frequently interchanged. It is good also to have special respect to those who have been friends to our family: *Thine own friend*, especially if he have been *thy father's friend*, forsake not; fail not both to serve him, and to use him as there is occasion: He is a tried friend, he knows thine affairs, he has a particular concern for thee, therefore be advised by him. It is a duty we owe to our parents, when they are gone, to love their friends, and consult with them. Solomon's son undid himself by forsaking the counsel of his father's friends.

2. A good reason given why we should thus value true friendship, and be choice of it.

(1.) Because of the pleasure of it. There is a great deal of *sweetness* in conversing and consulting with a cordial friend, it is like *ointment and perfume*, which are very grateful to the smell, and exhilarate the spirits, it *rejoiceth the heart*, the burthen of care is made lighter by unboosing our selves to our friend, and it is a great satisfaction to us to have his sentiments concerning our affairs. *The sweetness of friendship* lies not in hearty mirth, and hearty laughter, but in *hearty counsel*, faithful advice sincerely given, and without flattery; by *counsel of the soul*, so the word is; counsel which reacheth the case, and comes to the heart; counsel about soul-concerns, (*Psalms lvi. 16.*) We should reckon that the most

pleasant conversation which is about spiritual things, and promotes the prosperity of the soul.

(2.) Because of the profit and advantage of it; especially in a *day of calamity*; when we are here advised not to go into a *brother's house*, not to expect relief from a kinsman, merely for kindred sake, for the obligation of that commonly goes little further than calling cousin, and fails when it comes to the trial of a real kindness, but rather to apply our selves to our neighbours; that are at hand, and will be ready to us at an exigence: It is wisdom to oblige them by being neighbourly, and we shall have the benefit of it in distress, by finding them so to us, *Prov. xviii. 24.*

11. My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him that reproacheth me.

Children are here exhorted to be wise and good,

1. That they may be a comfort to their parents, and may *make their hearts glad*, even when *the evil days come*, and so recompense them for their care, *chap. xxiii. 15.*

2. That they may be a credit to them: *That I may answer him that reproacheth me*, with having been over-strict and severe in bringing up my children, and having taken a wrong method with them, in restraining them from the liberties which other young people take: *My son, be wise*, and then it will appear in the effect, that I went the wisest way to work with my children. Those that have been blest with a religious education, should carry it so in every thing, as to be a credit to their education, and to silence those who say, A young saint, an old devil, and to prove the contrary, A young saint, an old angel.

12. A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.

This we had before, *chap. xxii. 3.*

Note, 1. Evil may be foreseen. Where there is temptation, it is easy to foresee, that if we thrust our selves into it there will be sin, and as easy to foresee, that if we venture upon the evil of sin, there will follow the evil of punishment; and commonly God warns before he wounds, having *set watchmen over us*, *Jer. vi. 17.*

2. It will be well or ill with us according as we do or do not improve the foresight we have of evil before us. The prudent *man foreseeing the evil*, forecasts accordingly, and *hides himself*, but the simple is either so dull that he doth not foresee it, or so wilful and slothful that he will take no care to avoid it, and so he *passeth on securely and is punished*. We do well for our selves when we provide for hereafter.

13. Take his garment that is surety for a stranger, and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

This also we had before, *chap. xx. 16.*

1. It shews who they are that are hasting to poverty; those that have so little consideration as to be bound for every body that will ask them, and those that are given to women. Such as these will take up money as far as ever their credit will go, but they will certainly cheat their creditors at last, nay, they are cheating them all along. An honest man may be made a beggar, but he is not so that makes himself one.

2. It adviseth us to be so discreet in ordering our affairs, as not to lend money to those who are manifestly wasting their estates, unless they give very good security for it. Foolish lending is injustice to our families. He doth not say, get another to be bound with him, for he that makes himself a common voucher, will have those to be his security that are as insolvent as himself; therefore *take his garment*.

14. He that blesteth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him.

Note, 1. It is a great folly to be extravagant in praising even the best of our friends and benefactors; it is our duty to give every one his due praise, to applaud those that excel in knowledge, virtue and usefulness, and to acknowledge the kindnesses we have received with thankfulness, but to do this *with a loud voice, rising early in the morning*, to be always harping on this string in all companies, even to our friend's face, or so as that he may be sure to hear, to do it studiously, as we do that which we rise early to, to magnify the merits of our friend above measure, and with hyperboles, is fullsome and nauseous, and favours of hypocrisy and design; praising men for what they have done, is only to get more out of them; and every body conclude the parasite will be well paid for his panegyrick, or epistle dedicatory. We must not give that praise to our friend which is due to God only, as some think is intimated in *rising early* to do it; for in the morning God is to be praised. We must not *make too much haste to praise men*, so some understand it; not cry up men too soon for their abilities and

and performances, but let them first be proved; lest they be lifted up with pride, and laid to sleep in idleness.

2. It is a greater folly to be fond of being our selves extravagantly praised; a wise man rather counts it a curse, and a reflection upon him; not only designed to pick his pocket, but which may really turn to his prejudice. Modest praises (as a great man observes) invite such as are present to add to the commendation, but immodest, immoderate praises tempt them to detract rather, and to censure one that they hear over-commended. And besides, over-praising a man makes him the object of envy; every man puts in for a share of reputation, and therefore reckons himself injured if another monopolize it, or has more given him than his share. And the most danger of all is, that it is a temptation to pride; men are apt to think of themselves above what is meet, when others speak of them above what is meet. See how careful blessed Paul was not to be over-valued, 2 Cor. xii. 6.

15. A continual dropping in a very rainy day, and a contentious woman are alike. 16. Whosoever hideth her, hideth the wind, and the ointment of his right hand which bewrayeth it self.

Here, as before, Solomon laments the case of him that has a peevish, passionate wife, that is continually chiding, and making herself and all about her uneasy.

1. It is a grievance that there is no avoiding, for it is like a continual dropping in a very rainy day. The contentions of a neighbour may be like a sharp shower, troublesome for the time, yet while it lasts one may take shelter; but the contentions of a wife are like a constant, soaking rain, for which there is no remedy but patience. See chap. xix. 13.

2. It is a grievance that there is no concealing. A wife man would hide it if he could, for the sake both of his own and his wife's reputation, but he cannot, no more than he can conceal the noise of the wind when it blows, or the smell of a strong perfume. Those that are froward and brawling will proclaim their own shame, even when their friends in kindness to them would cover it.

17. Iron sharpneth iron; so a man sharpneth the countenance of his friend.

This speaks both the pleasure and the advantage of conversation: One man is no body; nor will poring upon a book in a corner, accomplish a man so as reading and studying of men will. Wise and profitable discourse sharpens mens wits; and those that have never so much knowledge, may by conference, have something added to them. It sharpens mens looks, and by cheering the spirits, puts a briskness and liveliness into the countenance; and gives a man such an air, as shews he is pleased himself, and makes him pleasing to those about him. Good mens graces are sharpened by converse with those that are good, and bad mens lusts and passions are sharpened by converse with those that are bad, as iron is sharpened by its like; especially by the file: Men are filed; i. e. made smooth; and bright, and fit for business, who were rough, and dull, and unactive, by conversation. This is designed;

1. To recommend to us this expedient for sharpening our selves; but with a caution to take heed whom we choose to converse with, because the influence upon us is so great; either for the better or for the worse.

2. To direct us what we must have in our eye in conversation, viz. to improve both others and our selves, not to pass away time, or banter one another, but to provoke one another to love and to good works, and so to make one another wiser and better.

18. Whoso keepeth the fig-tree; shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.

This is designed to encourage diligence, faithfulness, and constancy, even in mean employments: Though the calling be laborious and despicable, yet those that stick to it will find there is something to be got by it.

1. Let not a poor gardenier, that keeps the fig-tree, be discouraged, though it require constant care and attendance to nurse up fig-trees, and when they are grown to maturity to keep them in good order, and gather the figs in their seasons, yet he shall be paid for his pains, he shall eat the fruit of it; 1 Cor. ix. 7.

2. Nay, let not a poor servant think himself incapable of thriving, and being preferred, for if he be diligent in waiting on his master, observant of him, and obedient to him; if he keep his master, so the word is; if he do all he can for the securing of his person and reputation, and take care that his estate be not wasted or damaged, such a one shall be honoured; shall not only get a good word, but be preferred and rewarded. God is a Master who hath engaged to put an honour on those that serve him faithfully; John xii. 26.

19. As in water face answereth to face: so the heart of man to man.

This shews that there is a way,

1. Of knowing our selves; as the water is a looking-glass in which we may see our faces by reflection, so there are mirrors; by which the heart of man is discovered to a man, i. e. to himself. Let a man examine his own conscience, his thoughts, affections, and intentions. Let him behold his natural face in the glass of the divine law, Jam. i. 23. and he may discern what kind of man he is, and what is his true character, which it will be of great use to every man rightly to know.

2. Of knowing one another by our selves; for as there is a similitude between the face of a man, and the reflection of it in the water, so there is between one man's heart and another's; for God has fashioned mens hearts alike; and in many cases we may judge of others by our selves, which is one of the foundations on which that rule is built, of doing to others as we would be done by, Exod. xxiii. 9. *Nihil est unum uni tam simile, tam par, quam omnes inter nosmet ipsos sumus. Nemo ipse tam similis quam omnes sunt omnium.* Cic. de legib. l. 1. One corrupt heart is like another, and so is one sanctified heart, for the former bears the same image of the earthly, the latter the same image of the heavenly.

20. Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.

Two things are here said to be insatiable, and they are two things near of kin; death and sin.

1. Death is insatiable; the first death, the second death, both are so. The grave is not clogged with the multitude of dead bodies that are daily thrown into it; but is still an open sepulchre, and cries, Give, give; hell also has enlarged herself, and still has room for the damned spirits that are committed to that prison: Tophet is deep and large, Isa. xxx. 33.

2. Sin is insatiable. The eyes of man are never satisfied, nor the appetites of the carnal mind towards profit or pleasure, the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is he that loveth silver satisfied with silver. Men labour for that which surfeits, but satisfieth not; nay, it is dissatisfying; such a perpetual uneasiness have men justly been doomed to, ever since our first parents were not satisfied with all the trees of Eden, but they must meddle with the forbidden tree. Those whose eyes are ever towards the Lord in him are satisfied, and shall for ever be so.

21. As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise.

This gives us a touchstone by which we may try our selves; silver and gold are tried by putting them into the furnace and fining-pot, so is a man tried by praising him. Let him be extolled and preferred, and then he will shew himself what he is.

1. If a man be made; by the applause that is given him, proud, and conceited; and scornful, if he take the glory to himself which he should transmit to God, as Herod did; if the more he is praised, the more careless he is of what he saith and doth, if he lie in bed till noon; because his name is up, thereby it will appear that he is a vain, foolish man, and a man that, though he be praised, has nothing in him truly praiseworthy.

2. If, on the contrary; a man is made by his praise more thankful to God; more respectful to his friends, more watchful against every thing that may blemish his reputation, more diligent to improve himself, and do good to others, that he may answer the expectations of his friends from him, by this it will appear that he is a wise and good man. He has a good temper of mind that knows how to pass by evil report and good report, and is still the same, 2 Cor. vi. 8.

22. Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestil; yet will not his foolishness depart from him.

Solomon had said chap. xxii. 15. that the foolishness which is bound in the heart of a child may be driven out by the rod of correction, for then the mind is to be moulded, and the vicious habits have not taken root; but here he shews, that if it be not done then, it will be next to impossible to do it afterwards; if the disease be inveterate there is danger of its being incurable: Can the Ethiopian change his skin? Observe;

1. Some are so bad that rough and severe methods must be used with them; after gentle means have been tried in vain; they must be brayed in a mortar. God will take this way with them by his judgments; the magistrates must take this way with them by the rigour of the law. Force must be used with those that will not be ruled by reason, and love, and their own interest.

2. Some are so incorrigibly bad; that even those rough and severe methods do not answer the end; their foolishness will not depart from them: so fully are their hearts set in them to do evil; they are oft under the rod, and yet not humbled; in the furnace, and yet not refined, but, like Ahaz, trespass yet more, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. and what remains then, but that they should be rejected as reprobate silver.

23. Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds. 24. For riches are not for ever : and doth the crown *endure* to every generation? 25. The hay appeareth, and the tender grafs sheweth it self, and herbs of the mountains are gathered. 26. The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of the field. 27. And thou shalt have goats milk enough for thy food, for the food [of thy household, and for maintenance for thy maidens.

Here is, 1. A command given us to be diligent in our callings ; it is directed to husbandmen and shepherds, and those that deal in cattle ; but it is to be extended to all other lawful callings ; whatever our business is, within doors or without, we must apply our minds to it. This command intimates, (1.) That we ought to have some business to do in this world, and not to live in idleness. (2.) We ought rightly and fully to understand our business, and know what we have to do, and not meddle with that which we do not understand. (3.) We ought to have an eye to it ourselves, and not turn over all the care of it to others ; we should, with our own eyes, inspect the *state of our flocks*, it is the master's eye that makes them fat. (4.) We must be discreet and considerate in the management of our business ; *know the state of things*, and *look well* to them, that nothing may be lost, no opportunity let slip, but every thing done in proper time and order, and so as to turn to the best advantage. (5.) We must be diligent and *take pains* ; not only sit down and contrive, but up and be doing ; set thy heart to thy herds, as one in care ; lay thy hands, lay thy bones to thy business.

2. The reasons to enforce this command. Consider,

1. The uncertainty of worldly wealth, *ver. 24. Riches are not for ever*, i. e. (1.) Other riches are not so durable as these are ; *look well to thy flocks and herds*, thine estate in the country, and the stock upon that, for these are staple-commodities, which, in a succession, will be for ever, whereas riches in trade and merchandize will not be so ; the *crown* it self may, perhaps, not be so sure to thy family, as thy flocks and herds. (2.) Even these riches will go to decay, if they be not well looked after. If a man had an *abbey* (as we say) and be slothful and wasteful, he may make an end of it ; even the crown and the revenues of it, if care be not taken, will suffer damage, nor will it *continue to every generation*, without very good management. Though David had the crown entailed on his family, yet he *looked well to his flocks*, 1 Chron. xxvii. 29, 31.

2. The bounty and liberality of nature, or rather, of the God of nature and his providence, *ver. 25. The hay appears*. In taking care of the *flocks and herds*, (1.) There needs no great labour, no plowing or sowing, the food for them is the spontaneous product of the ground, thou hast nothing to do but turn them into it in the summer, *when the grafs shews it self*, and to *gather the herbs of the mountains* for them against winter. God has done his part, thou art ungrateful to him, and unjustly refusest to serve his providence, if thou dost not do thine. (2.) There is an opportunity to be observed and improved ; a time when *the hay appears* ; but if thou let slip that time, thy flocks and herds will fare the worse for it. As for our selves, so for our cattle, we ought, with the ant, to provide meat in summer.

3. The profit of good husbandry in a family : *Keep thy sheep, and thy sheep will help to keep thee* : thou shalt have food for thy children and servants : *Goats milk enough*, *ver. 27. and enough is as good as a feast*. Thou shalt have raiment likewise, the *lambs wool shall be for thy clothing* : Thou shalt have money to pay thy rent, the goats thou shalt have to sell shall be *the price of thy field* : nay, as some understand it, *Thou shalt become a purchaser*, and buy land to leave to thy children, *ver. 26.* Note 1. If we have food and raiment, and wherewithal to give every body their own, we have enough, and ought to be not only content, but thankful. 2. Masters of families must provide not only for themselves, but for their families, and see that their servants have a fitting maintenance. 3. Plain food and plain clothing, if it be but competent, is all we should aim at. Reckon thy self well done to if thou be clothed with home-spun cloth, with the fleece of thy own lambs, and fed with goats milk, let that serve for thy food which serves for the *food of thy household, and the maintenance of thy maidens* : be not desirous of dainties, *far fetched and dear bought*. 4. This should encourage us to be careful and industrious about our business, that that will bring in a sufficient maintenance for our families : we shall *eat the labour of our hands*.

C H A P XXVIII.

THE wicked flee when no man pursueth : but the righteous are bold as as a lion.

See here, 1. What continual frights they are subject to that go on in wicked ways ; guilt in the conscience makes men a terror to themselves, so that they are ready to *flee when none pursues* ; like one that absconds for debt, who thinks every one he meets a

bailiff. Though they pretend to be easy, there are secret fears which haunt them wherever they go, so that they fear where no present or imminent danger is, *Psal. liii. 5.* They that have made God their enemy and know it, cannot but see the whole creation at war with them, and therefore can have no true enjoyment of themselves, no confidence, no courage, but a *fearful looking for of judgment*. Sin makes men cowards.

Degeneres animos timor arguit. Virg.

Quos diri conscia facti mens habet attonitos. Juv.

If they flee when none pursues, what will they do when they shall see God himself pursuing them with his armies? *Job xx. 24. xv. 24.* See *Deut. xxviii. 25. Lev. xxvi. 36.*

2. What a holy security and serenity of mind they enjoy that keep conscience void of offence, and so keep themselves in the love of God. *The righteous are bold as a lion*, as a young lion ; in the greatest dangers they have a God of almighty power to trust to, *therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed* ; whatever difficulties they meet with in the way of their duty, they are not daunted by them, *none of those things move me*.

Hic murus aeneus esto, Nil consciri sibi. Hor.

2. For the transgression of a land, many are the princes thereof : but by a man of understanding and knowledge, the state thereof shall be prolonged.

Note, 1. National sins bring national disorders, and the disturbances of the publick repose : *For the transgression of a land*, and a general defection from God and religion to idolatry, profaneness, or immorality, *many are the princes thereof*, many at the same time pretending to the sovereignty, and contending for it, by which the people are crumbled into parties and factions, biting and devouring one another. Or many successively in a little time, one cutting off another, as 1 *Kings xvi. 8, &c.* or soon cut off by the hand of God, or of a foreign enemy, as 2 *Kings xxiv. 5, &c.* As the people suffer for the sins of the prince,

Delirant reges plectuntur Achivi,

so the government sometimes suffers for the sins of the people.

2. Wisdom will prevent or redress these grievances : *by a man*, i. e. by a people of understanding, that come again to themselves and their right mind, things are kept in a good order, or, if disturbed, brought back to the old channel again. Or, by a prince of *understanding and knowledge*, a privy-counsellor, or minister of state, that will restrain or suppress *the transgression of the land*, and take the right methods of healing the state thereof, the good estate of it will be prolonged. We cannot imagine what a great deal of service one wise man may do to a nation in a critical juncture.

3. A poor man that oppresseth the poor, is like a sweeping rain which leaveth no food.

See here, 1. How hard-hearted poor people are, many times, to one another ; not only not doing such good offices as they might do one to another, but imposing upon and over-reaching one another. Those that know, by experience, the miseries of poverty, should be compassionate to those who suffer the like, but are inexcusably barbarous if they be injurious to them.

2. How imperious and griping those commonly are that, being indigent and necessitous, get into power : if a prince prefer a poor man, he forgets that ever he was poor, and none shall be so oppressive to the poor as he, nor squeeze them so cruelly. The hungry leech and the dry sponge suck most : *Set a beggar on horseback and he will ride without mercy* ; he is like a *sweeping rain* which washeth away the corn in the ground, and lays and beats out that which is grown, so that it *leaves no food*. Princes therefore ought not to put those into places of trust who are poor, and in debt, and behind hand in the world : nor any that make it their main business to enrich themselves.

4. They that forsake the law, praise the wicked ; but such as keep the law, contend with them.

Note, 1. Those that *praise the wicked*, make it to appear, that they do themselves *forsake the law*, and go contrary to it, for that curseth and condemneth the wicked. Wicked people will speak well of one another, and so strengthen one another's hand in their wicked ways, hoping thereby to silence the clamours of their own consciences, and to serve the interests of the devil's kingdom, which is not done by any thing so effectually as by keeping vice in reputation.

2. Those that do indeed make conscience of the law of God themselves, will, in their places, vigorously oppose sin, and bear their testimony against it, and do what they can to shame and suppress it ; they will reprove the works of darkness, and silence the excuses which are made for those works, and do what they can

to bring gross offenders to punishment, that others may hear and fear.

5. Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understand all *things*.

Note, 1. As the prevalency of mens lusts is owing to the darkness of their understandings, so the darkness of their understandings is very much owing to the dominion of their lusts. *Men understand not judgment*, discern not between truth and falsehood, right and wrong; they understand not the law of God as the rule either of their duty, or of their doom; and, (1.) Therefore it is that *they are evil men*, their wickedness is the effect of their ignorance and error, *Eph. iv. 18.* (2.) Therefore they *understand not judgment*, because they are *evil men*; their corruptions blind their eyes, and fill them with prejudices, and because they do evil they *hate the light*. It is just with God also to *give them up to strong delusions*.

2. As mens seeking the Lord is a good sign that they do understand much, so it is a good means of their understanding more, even of their understanding all things needful for them. They that see God's glory before them as their end, his favour as their felicity, and his word as their rule, and apply themselves to him upon all occasions by prayer, *they seek the Lord*, and he will give them the spirit of wisdom. If a man *do his will* he shall know his doctrine, *John vii. 17.* A good understanding they have, and a better they shall have that *do his commandments*, *Psal. cxi. 10. i Cor. ii. 12. 15.*

6. Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich.

Here, 1. It is supposed that a man may *walk in his uprightness*, and yet be poor in this world; may be poor in the world; which is a temptation to dishonesty, and yet may resist the temptation, and continue to *walk in his uprightness*. Also that a man may be *perverse in his ways*, injurious to God and man; and yet be rich and prosper in the world for a while; may be rich, and so lie under great obligations, and have great opportunities to do good; and yet be *perverse in his ways* and do a great deal of hurt.

2. It is maintained as a paradox to a blind world, that an honest, godly poor man, is better than a wicked, ungodly rich man; has a better character, is in a better condition, has more comfort in himself, and is a greater blessing to the world; and is worthy of much more honour and respect. It is not only certain that his case will be better at death, but it is better in life. When Aristides was, by a rich man, upbraided with his poverty, he answered, *Thy riches doth thee more hurt than my poverty doth me.*

7. Whoso keepeth the law, is a wise son: but he that is a companion of riotous men, shameth his father.

Note, 1. Religion is true wisdom, and it makes men wise in every relation. He that conscientiously *keepeth the law* is wise, and he will particularly be a *wise son*, i. e. will carry it discreetly towards his parents, for the law of God teacheth him to do so.

2. Bad company is a great hindrance to religion. Those that are *companions of riotous men*, that chuse such for their companions, and delight in their conversation, they will certainly be drawn from *keeping the law of God*, and drawn to transgress it, *Psal. cxix. 115.*

3. Wickedness is not only a reproach to the sinner himself, but to all that are akin to him; he that keeps rakish company, and spends his time and money with them, he not only grieves his parents, but shames them, it turns to their disrepute, as if they had not done their duty to him. They are ashamed that a child of theirs should be scandalous and abusive to their neighbours.

8. He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor.

Note, 1. That which is ill got, though it may increase much, will not last long. A man may, perhaps, raise a great estate in a little time by usury and extortion, fraud and oppression of the poor, but it will not continue; he gathers it for himself, but it shall prove to have been gathered for some body else that he has no kindness for. His estate shall go to decay, and another man's shall be raised out of the ruins of it.

2. Sometimes God in his providence so orders it, that that which one got unjustly, another useth charitably; it is strangely turned into the hands of one *that will pity the poor*, and do good with it, and so cut off the entail of the curse which he brought upon it that got it by deceit and violence. Thus the same providence that punisheth the cruel, and disables them to do any more hurt, rewards the merciful, and enables them to do so much the more good. *To him that hath the ten pounds give the pound which the wicked servant hid in the napkin, for to him that has, and useth it*

well, more *shall be given*, *Luke xix. 24.* Thus the poor are repaid, the charitable are encouraged, and God is glorified.

9. He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.

Note, 1. It is by the word and prayer that our communion with God is kept up. God speaks to us by his law, and expects we should hear him and heed him, we speak to him by prayer, to which we wait for an answer of peace. How reverent and serious should we be whenever we are hearing from; and speaking to the Lord of glory!

2. If God's word be not regarded by us, our prayers shall not only not be accepted of God, but they shall be an abomination to him; not only our sacrifices, which were ceremonial appointments, but even our prayers, which are moral duties, and which, when they are put up by the upright, are so much his delight. *See Isai. i. 11.* The sinner, whose prayers God is thus angry at, is one who wilfully and obstinately refuseth to obey God's commandments, who will not so much as give them the hearing, but causeth his ear to decline the law, refuseth when God calls, God will justly refuse him when he calls. *See Prov. i. 24, 28.*

10. Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way, he shall fall himself into his own pit: but the upright shall have good things in possession.

Here is, 1. The doom of seducers, that attempt to draw good people, or those who profess to be such, into sin and mischief; that would take a pride in *causing the righteous to go astray in an evil way*, in drawing them into a snare, that they may insult over them, they shall not gain their point; it is impossible to deceive the elect, but they shall *fall themselves into their own pit*; and having been, not only sinners, but tempters; not only unrighteous, but enemies to the righteous, their condemnation will be so much the greater, *Matth. xxiii. 14, 15.*

2. The happiness of the sincere: they shall not only be preserved from the evil way which the wicked would decoy them into; but they shall *have good things*, the best things, *in possession*, the graces and comforts of God's Spirit, besides what they have in reversion.

11. The rich man is wise in his own conceit: but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out.

Note, 1. Those that are rich are apt to think themselves wise, because, whatever else they are ignorant of, they know how to get and save; and they that are purse-proud expect all they say should be regarded as an oracle, and a law, and that none should dare to contradict them; but every sheaf bow to theirs; this humour is fed by flatterers, who, because, like Jezebel's prophets, they are fed at their table, cry up their wisdom.

2. Those that are poor often prove themselves wiser than they. A poor man, who has taken pains to get wisdom, having no other way (as the rich man has) to get a reputation, he *searcheth him out*, and makes it to appear he is not such a scholar, nor such a politician as he is taken to be. See how variously God dispenseth his gifts, to some he gives wealth, to others wisdom, and it is easy to say which of these is the best gift which we should *covet most earnestly*.

12. When righteous men do rejoice, there is great glory: but when the wicked rise, a man is hidden.

Note, 1. The comfort of the people of God is the honour of the nation in which they live. There is a *great glory* dwelling in the land when *the righteous do rejoice*, i. e. when they have their liberty, the free exercise of their religion and are not persecuted, when the government countenanceth them, and speaks comfortably to them, when they prosper and grow rich; and much more when they are preferred, and employed; and have power put into their hands.

2. The advancement of the wicked is the eclipsing of the beauty of a nation: *When the wicked rise* and get head, they make head against all that is sacred, and then *a man is hidden*, a good man is thrust into obscurity, is necessitated to abscond for his own safety: corruptions prevail so generally, that, as in Elijah's time, there seem to be no good men left, the *wicked walk so thick on every side*.

13. He that covereth his sins, shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

Here is, 1. The folly of indulging sin, of palliating and excusing it, denying or extenuating it, diminishing it, dissembling it, or throwing the blame of it upon others, he that thus *covereth his sins* he shall not prosper, let him never expect it: he shall not succeed in his endeavour to cover his sin, for it will be discovered

sooner or later, *there is nothing hid which shall not be revealed*, a bird of the air shall carry the voice, *murder will out*, and so will other sins: *he shall not prosper*, i. e. he shall not obtain the pardon of his sin, nor can he have any true peace of conscience: David owns himself in a constant toss while he *covered his sins*, Psalm xxxii. 3, 4. While the patient conceals his distemper he cannot expect a cure.

2. The benefit of parting with it, both by a penitent confession and a universal reformation: *He that confesseth his guilt to God*, and is careful not to return to sin again, he shall *find mercy with God*, and shall have the comfort of it in his own bosom. His conscience shall be eased and his ruin prevented. See 1 John i. 9. Jer. iii. 12, 13. When we set sin before our face (as David, *my sin is ever before me*) God casts it behind his back.

14. *Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardneth his heart shall fall into mischief.*

Here is, 1. The benefit of a holy caution, it sounds strange, but it is very true: *Happy is the man that feareth alway*. Most people think, happy they that never fear; but there is a fear which is so far from having torment in it, that it has in it the greatest satisfaction. Happy is the man that always keeps up in his mind a holy awe and reverence of God, his glory, goodness, and government; that is always afraid of offending God and incurring his displeasure, that keeps conscience tender, and has a dread of the appearances of evil, that is always jealous of himself, and distrustful of his own sufficiency, and lives in expectations of troubles and changes, so that whenever they come they are no surprize to him. He that keeps up such a fear as this will live a life of faith and watchfulness, and therefore *happy* is he, blessed and holy.

2. The danger of a sinful presumption. *He that hardneth his heart*, that mocketh at fear, and sets God and his judgments at defiance, and receives not the impressions of his word or rod, he *shall fall into mischief*, his presumption will be his ruin, and whatever sin (which is the greatest mischief) he falls into, it is owing to the hardness of his heart.

15. *As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; so is a wicked ruler over his poor people.*

It is written indeed, *Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people*; but if he be a wicked ruler that oppresseth the people, especially the poor people, robbing them of the little they have, and making a prey of them, whatever we may call him, this scripture calls him *a roaring lion, and a ranging bear*.

1. In respect of his character, he is brutish, and barbarous, and blood-thirsty, he is rather to be put among the beasts of prey, the wildest and most savage, than to be reckoned of that noble rank of beings whose glory is reason and humanity.

2. In respect of the mischief they do to their subjects, they are dreadful as the *roaring lion*, who makes the forest tremble; they are devouring as a hungry *bear*, and the more necessitous they are, the more mischief they do, and the more greedy of gain they are.

16. *The prince that wanteth understanding, is also a great oppressor: but he that hateth covetousness, shall prolong his days.*

Two things are here intimated to be the causes of the male-administration of princes.

1. The love of money, that *root of all evil*; for *hating covetousness* here stands opposed to *oppression*, according to Moses's character of good magistrates, *men fearing God and hating covetousness*, Exod. xviii. 21. Not only not being covetous, but *hating* it, and shaking the hands from holding of bribes. A ruler that is covetous will neither do justly, nor love mercy, but the people under him shall be bought and sold.

2. Want of consideration. *He that hates covetousness shall prolong his government and peace*, shall be happy in the affections of his people, and the blessings of his God. It is as much the interest as duty of princes to reign in righteousness; oppressors therefore and tyrants are the greatest fools in the world, they *want understanding*, they do not consult their own honour, ease, and safety, but sacrifice all to their ambition of an absolute and arbitrary power. They might be much happier in the hearts of their subjects, than in their necks or estates.

17. *A man that doth violence to the blood of any person, shall flee to the pit, let no man stay him.*

This agrees with that ancient law, *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed*, Gen. ix. 6. and speaks,

1. The doom of the shedder of blood. He that has committed murder, though he flies for his life, shall be continually haunted with terrors, shall himself *flee to the pit*, betray himself, and torment himself, like Cain, who, when he had killed his brother, became a fugitive and a vagabond, and trembled continually.

2. The duty of the avenger of blood, whether the magistrate, or the next of kin, or whoever are concerned in making inquisition for blood, let them be close and vigorous in the prosecution, and let it not be bought off. They that acquit the murderer, or do any thing to help him off, come in sharers in the guilt of blood; nor can the land be purged from blood, but by the blood of him that shed it, Numb. xxxv. 33.

18. *Whoso walketh uprightly, shall be saved: but he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once.*

Note, 1. Those that are honest are always safe. He that acts with sincerity, that speaks as he thinks, has a single eye in every thing at the glory of God and the good of his brethren, that would not, for a world, do an unjust thing if he knew it; that in all manner of conversation *walks uprightly*, he *shall be saved* hereafter. We find a glorious company of those *in whose mouth was found no guile*, Rev. xiv. 5. they shall be safe now: Integrity and uprightness will preserve men, will give them a holy security in the worst of times; for it will preserve their comfort, their reputation, and all their interests: they may be injured, they cannot be hurt.

2. Those that are false and dishonest are never safe. *He that is perverse in his way*, that thinks to secure himself by fraudulent practices, by dissimulation and treachery, or by an estate ill got, he *shall fall*, nay, he *shall fall at once*, not gradually, and with warning given, but suddenly, without previous notice, for he is least safe when he is most secure. He *falls at once*, and so has neither time to guard against his ruine, nor to provide for it; and being a surprize upon him, it will be so much the greater terror to him.

19. *He that tilleth his land, shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons, shall have poverty enough.*

Note, 1. Those that are diligent in their callings take the way to live comfortably; he that *tills his land*, and tends his shop, and minds his business, whatever it is; he *shall have plenty of bread*, of that which is necessary for himself and his family, and with which he may be charitable to the poor; he *shall eat the labour of his hands*.

2. Those that are idle, and careless, and company-keepers, though they indulge themselves in living (as they think) easily and pleasantly, they take the way to live miserably. He that hath land, and values himself upon that, but doth not till it, neglects his business, will not take pains, but *follows after vain persons*, drinks with them, joins with them in their frolicks and vain sports, and idles away his time with them, he shall have *poverty enough*, shall be *satiated*, or *replenished* with poverty, so the word is; he takes those courses which lead so directly to it, that he seems to court it, and he shall have his belly full of it.

20. *A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich, shall not be innocent.*

Here, 1. We are directed in the true way to be happy, and that is to be holy, and honest; he that is *faithful* to God and man, shall be blessed of the Lord, and he *shall abound with blessings* of the upper and nether springs: Men shall praise him, and pray for him, and be ready to do him any kindness: He shall abound in doing good, and shall himself be a blessing to the place where he lives. Usefulness shall be the reward of faithfulness, and it is a good reward.

2. We are cautioned against a false and deceitful way to happiness, and that is, right or wrong, raising an estate presently; say not, that is the way to *abound with blessings*, for *he that maketh haste to be rich*, more haste than good speed, he *shall not be innocent*; and if he be not, he shall not be blessed of God, but rather bring a curse upon what he has; nor if he be not innocent, can he long be easy to himself: He shall not be accounted innocent by his neighbours, but shall have their ill will, and ill word. He doth not say he *cannot be innocent*, but there is all the probability in the world he will not prove so; *he that hasteth with his feet sinneth*, stumbleth, falleth. *Sed quæ reverentia legum? Quis metus aut pudor est unquam prosperantis avari?*

21. *To have respect of persons, is not good: for, for a piece of bread that man will transgress.*

Note, 1. It is a fundamental error in the administration of justice, and that which cannot but lead men to abundance of transgression; to consider the parties concerned, more than the merits of the cause, so as to favour one because he is a gentleman, a scholar, my countryman, my old acquaintance, has formerly done me a kindness, or may do me one, or is of my party and persuasion; and to bear hard on the other party, because he is a stranger, a poor man, has done me an ill turn, is, or has been my rival, or is not of my mind, or has voted against me: Judgment is perverted when

when any consideration of this kind is admitted into the scale, any thing but pure right.

2. Those that are partial will be paltry, that have once broke through the bonds of equity, though at first it must be some great bribe, some noble present that would bias them, yet when they have debauched their consciences, they will at length be so sordid, that *for a piece of bread* they will give judgment against their consciences; they will rather play at small games than sit out.

22. He that hasteth to be rich, *hath* an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him.

Here again Solomon shews the sin and folly of those that will be rich, they are resolved they will be so, *per fas, per nefas*; they will be so with all speed, they are riding tantivy into an estate.

1. They have no comfort in it, they *have an evil eye*, i. e. they are always grieving at those that have more than they, and always grudging their necessary expences, because they think the former keeps them from seeming rich, the latter from being so, and between both they must needs be perpetually uneasy.

2. They have no assurance of the continuance of it, and yet take no thought to provide against the loss of it: *Poverty shall come upon them*, and the riches which they made wings for that they might fly to them, will make themselves wings to fly from them; but they are secure and improvident, and do *not consider* this, that while they are making *haste to be rich*, they are really making *haste to be poor*, else they would not *trust to uncertain riches*.

23. He that rebuketh a man, afterward shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.

Note, 1. Flatterers may please those for a time, who, upon second thoughts, will detest and despise them: If ever they come to be convinced of the evil of those sinful courses they were flattered in, and to be ashamed of that pride and vanity which was humoured and gratified by those flatteries, they will hate the fawning flatterers, as having had an ill design upon them, and the fulsome flatteries, as having had an ill effect upon them, and being become nauseous.

2. Reprovers may displease those at first, who yet, afterwards, when the passion is over, and the bitter physick begins to work well, will love and respect them. He that deals faithfully with his friend, in telling him of his faults, though he may put him into some heat for the present, and, perhaps, have hard words instead of thanks for his pains, yet afterwards he will not only have the comfort in his own bosom of having done his duty, but he whom he reproved also will acknowledge that it was a kindness, will conceive an opinion of his wisdom and faithfulness, and look upon him as fit to be a friend. He that cries out against his surgeon for hurting him when he is searching his wound, yet will pay him well, and thank him too, when he has cured it.

24. Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and faith, *It is* no transgression; the same *is* the companion of a destroyer.

As Christ shews the absurdity and wickedness of those children who think it is no duty, in some cases, to maintain their parents, *Matt. xv. 5.* so Solomon here shews the absurdity and wickedness of those who think it is no sin to rob their parents, either by force, or secretly, by wheedling them, or threatening them, or by wasting what they have, and (which is no better than robbing them) running into debt, and leaving them to pay it. Now,

1. This is commonly made light of by untoward children, they say, *It is not transgression*, for it will be their own shortly, their parents can well enough spare it, they have occasion for it, they cannot live as gentlemen upon the allowance their parents give them, which they complain of as too strait; with such excuses as these they endeavour to shift off the conviction: But,

2. How light soever an ungoverned youth makes of it, it is really a very great sin; he that doth it *is the companion of a destroyer*; no better than a robber on the high-way. What wickedness will he stick at that will rob his own parents?

25. He that is of a proud heart, stirreth up strife; but he that putteth his trust in the LORD, shall be made fat.

Note, 1. Those make themselves lean, and continually unquiet, that are haughty and quarrelsome, for they are opposed to those that *shall be made fat*. He that is of a proud heart, that is conceited of himself, and looks with a contempt upon all about him, that cannot bear either competition or contradiction, he *stirs up strife*, makes mischief, and creates disturbance to himself and every body else.

2. These make themselves fat, and always easy, that live in a continual dependence upon God and his grace; *he that putteth his trust in the Lord*, that, instead of struggling for himself, commits his cause to God, he *shall be made fat*; he saves the money which others spend upon their pride and contentiousness, he enjoys himself,

and has abundant satisfaction in his God, and thus his soul dwells at ease, and he is most likely to have plenty of outward good things. None live so easily, so pleasantly, as those that live by faith.

26. He that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.

Here is, 1. The character of a fool, *he trusts to his own heart*, to his own wisdom and counsels, his own strength and sufficiency, his own merit and righteousness, and the good opinion he hath of himself; he that doth so *is a fool*, for he trusts to that not only which *is deceitful above all things*, *Jer. xvii. 9.* but which has many a time deceived him: This implies, that it is the character of a wise man, as before, *ver. 25.* to *put his trust in the Lord*, and in his power and promise, and to follow his conduct, *Prov. iii. 5, 6.*

2. The comfort of a wise man. He that *walks wisely*, that trusts not to his own heart, but is humble; and self-diffident, and goes on in the strength of the Lord God, *he shall be delivered*; when the fool that trusts in his own heart shall be destroyed.

27. He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack; but he that hideth his eyes, shall have many a curse.

Here is, 1. A promise to be charitable: *He that gives to the poor* shall himself be never the poorer for so doing, *he shall not lack*; if he have but little, and so be in danger of lacking, let him give out of his little, and that will prevent it from coming to nothing; as the bounty of the widow of Sarepta to Elijah, for whom she made a little cake, first saved what she had when it was reduced to a handful of meal. If he have much, let him give much out of it, and that will prevent its going less; he and his shall not want what is given in pious charity: What we gave, we have.

2. A threatening to the uncharitable: *He that hideth his eyes*, that he may not see the miseries of the poor, nor read their petitions, lest his eye should affect his heart, and extort some relief from him, *he shall have many a curse*, both from God and man, and neither causeless, and therefore they shall come. Woful is the condition of that man that has the word of God and the prayers of the poor against him.

28. When the wicked rise, men hide themselves; but when they perish, the righteous increase.

This is to the same purpose with what we had, *ver. 12.*

1. When ill men are preferred, that which is good is clouded and run down: When power is put into the hands of *the wicked*, *men hide themselves*, wise men retire into privacy, and decline public business, not caring to be employed under them; rich men get out of the way, for fear of being squeezed for what they have; and, which is worst of all, good men abscond, despairing to do good, and fearing to be persecuted and ill treated.

2. When ill men are displaced, degraded, and their power taken from them, then that which is good revives again; then *the righteous increase*; for *when they perish*, good men will be put in their room, that will by their example and interest countenance religion and righteousness. It is well with a land when the number of good people increaseth in it; and it is therefore the policy of all princes, states, and potentates, to encourage them, and to take special care of the good education of youth.

C H A P. XXIX.

1. **H**E that being often reproved hardneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

Here, 1. The obstinacy of many wicked people in a wicked way is to be greatly lamented. They are *often reproved* by parents and friends, by magistrates and ministers, by the providence of God, and by their own consciences, have had their sins set in order before them, and fair warning given them of the consequences of them, but all in vain, they *harden their necks*, perhaps, they sling away, and will not so much as give the reproof a patient hearing; or if they do, yet they go on in the sins for which they are reproved, they will not bow their necks to the yoke, but are children of Belial, they refuse reproof, *Prov. x. 17.* despise it, *Prov. v. 12.* hate it, *Prov. xii. 1.*

2. The issue of this obstinacy is to be greatly dreaded. They that go on in sin, in despite of admonition, they *shall be destroyed*; those that will not be reformed must expect to be ruined; if the rods answer not the end, expect the axes; they *shall be suddenly destroyed*, in the midst of their security, and *without remedy*; they have sinned against the preventing remedy, and therefore let them not expect any recovering remedy. Hell is remediless destruction; they *shall be destroyed, and no healing*, so the word is: If God wounds, who can heal?

2. When

2. When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.

This is what was said before, chap. xxviii. 12, 28.

1. *The people will have cause to rejoice, or mourn, according as their rulers are, righteous, or wicked; for if the righteous be in authority, sin will be punished and restrained, religion and virtue will be supported, and kept in reputation; but if the wicked get power in their hands, wickedness will abound, religion and religious people will be prosecuted, and so the ends of government will be perverted.*

2. *The people will rejoice, or mourn, according as their rulers are, righteous, or wicked: Such a conviction are even the common people under, of the excellency of virtue and religion, that they will rejoice when they see it preferred and countenanced; and, on the contrary, let men have never so much honour and power, if they be wicked and vicious, and use it ill, they make themselves contemptible and base before all the people, as those priests, Mal. ii. 9. and subjects will think themselves miserable under such a government.*

3. Whoso loveth wisdom, rejoiceth his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots, spendeth his substance.

Both the parts of this verse repeat what had been often said, but comparing them together, the sense of them will be enlarged from each other.

1. Be it observed to the honour of a virtuous young man, that he loves wisdom, he is a philosopher (for that signifies a lover of wisdom) for religion is the best philosophy; he avoids ill company, and especially the company of lewd women; hereby he rejoiceth his parents, and hath the satisfaction of being a comfort to them, and increaseth his estate, and is like to live comfortably.

2. Be it observed to the reproach of a vicious young man, that he hates wisdom, he keeps company with scandalous women, that will be his ruin both soul and body; he grieves his parents, and, like the prodigal son, devours their living with harlots. Nothing will beggar men sooner than the lusts of uncleanness; and the best preservative from those ruinous lusts is wisdom.

4. The king by judgment establisheth the land: but he that receiveth gifts, overthroweth it.

Here is, 1. The happiness of a people under a good government. The care and business of a prince should be to establish the land, to maintain its fundamental laws, to settle the minds of his subjects, and make them easy; to secure their liberties and properties from hostilities, and for posterity, and to set in order the things that are wanting; this he must do by judgment, by wise counsels, and by the steady administration of justice, without respect of persons, which will have these good effects.

2. The misery of a people under a bad government. A man of oblations, so it is in the margin, overthroweth the land; a man that is either sacrilegious, or superstitious, or invades the priest's office, as Saul, and Uzziah; or, a man that aims at nothing but getting money, and will, for a good bribe, connive at the most guilty, and, in hope of one, prosecute the innocent; such governors as these will ruin a country.

5. A man that flattereth his neighbour, spreadeth a net for his feet.

Those may be said to flatter their neighbours, who commend and applaud that good in them; the good they do, or the good they have, which really either is not, or is not such as they represent it, and who profess that esteem and affection for them, which really they have not; these spread a net for their feet.

1. For their neighbours feet whom they flatter; they have an ill design in it, they would not speak them thus fair, but that they hope to make a hand of them; and it is therefore wisdom to suspect those who flatter us, that they are secretly laying a snare for us, and stand on our guard accordingly. Or it has an ill effect on those who are flattered, it puffs them up with pride, and makes them conceited and confident of themselves, and so proves a net that entangles them in sin.

2. For their own feet, so some understand it. He that flatters others, in expectation they will return his compliments, and flatter him, doth but make himself ridiculous and odious, even to those he flatters.

6. In the transgression of an evil man, there is a snare: but the righteous doth sing and rejoice.

Here is, 1. The peril of a sinful way; there is not only a punishment at the end of it, but a snare in it, one sin is a temptation to another, and there are troubles which as a snare come suddenly upon evil men in the midst of their transgressions; nay, their transgression it self often involves them in vexations, their sin is their

punishment, and they are holden in the cords of their own iniquity, Prov. v. 22.

2. The pleasantness of the way of holiness. The snare that is in the transgression of evil men spoils all their mirth, but righteous men are kept from those snares, or delivered out of them; they walk at liberty, walk in safety, and therefore they sing and rejoice; they that make God their chief joy, have him for their exceeding joy, and it is their own fault if they do not rejoice evermore. If there be any true joy on this side heaven, doubtless they have it whose conversation is in heaven.

7. The righteous considereth the cause of the poor: but the wicked regardeth not to know it.

It is pity but that every one that sues *sub forma pauperis* should have an honest cause, (they are of all other inexcusable, if they have not) because the scripture has so well provided that it should have a fair hearing, and that the judge himself should be of council as for the prisoner, so for the pauper.

1. It is here made the character of a righteous judge, that he considereth the cause of the poor; it is every man's duty to consider the poor, Psalm xli. 1. but the judgment of the poor is to be considered by those that sit in judgment; they must take as much pains to find out the right in a poor man's cause, as in a rich man's: Sense of justice must make both judge and advocate as solicitous and industrious in the poor man's cause, as if they hoped for the greatest advantage.

2. It is made the character of a wicked man, that, because it is a poor man's cause, which there is nothing to be got by, he regardeth not to know it, in the true state of it, for he cares not which way it goes, right or wrong. See Job xxix. 16.

8. Scornful men bring a city into a snare: but wise men turn away wrath.

See here, 1. Who are the men that are dangerous to the publick, scornful men; when such are employed in the business of the state, they do things with precipitation, because they scorn to deliberate, and will not take time for consideration, and consultation; they do things illegal and unjustifiable, because they scorn to be hampered by laws and constitutions, break their faith, because they scorn to be bound by their word; provoke the people, because they scorn to please them; thus they bring a city into a snare by their ill conduct, or, as the margin reads it, they set a city on fire, they sow discord among the citizens, and run them into confusion. These are scornful men that mock at religion, the obligations of conscience, and the fears of another world, and every thing that is sacred and serious; such men are the plagues of their generation, they bring God's judgments upon a land, set men together by the ears, and so bring all to confusion.

2. Who are the men that are the blessings of a land; the wise men, who, by promoting religion, which is true wisdom, turn away the wrath of God, and who, by prudent counsels, reconcile contending parties, and prevent the mischievous consequences of divisions. Proud and foolish men kindle the fires which wise and good men must extinguish.

9. If a wise man contendeth with a foolish man, whether he rage or laugh, there is no rest.

A wise man is here advised not to set his wit to a fool's, not to dispute with him, or by contending with him to think either of fastning reason upon him, or gaining right from him. If a wise man contend with a wise man, he may hope to be understood, and, as far as he has reason and equity on his side, to carry his point, at least, to bring the controversy to a head, and issue it amicably; but if he contend with a foolish man, there is no rest; he will see no end of it, nor will he have any satisfaction in it, but must expect to be always uneasy.

1. Whether the foolish man he contends with rage or laugh, whether he take heinously or take scornfully what is said to him; whether he rail at it, or mock at it, one of the two he will do, and so there will be no rest. However it is given it will be ill taken, and the wisest man must expect to be either scolded or ridiculed, if he contend with a fool: He that fights with a dunghill, whether he be conqueror or conquered, is sure to be ill dirtied.

2. Whether the wise man himself rage or laugh, whether he takes the serious or the jocular way of dealing with the fool; whether he be severe or pleasant with him, whether he come with a rod, or with the spirit of meekness, (1 Cor. iv. 21.) it is all alike, no good is done. We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced, mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.

10. The blood-thirsty hate the upright: but the just seek his soul.

Note, 1. Ill men hate their best friends. The blood-thirsty, all the seed of the old serpent, who was a murderer from the beginning, and inherit his enmity against the seed of the woman, they hate the upright, they seek the ruin of good men, because they con-

condemn the wicked world, and witness against it. Christ told his disciples, they should be *hated of all men*. Bloody men do especially *hate upright* magistrates, that would restrain and reform them, and put the laws in execution against them, and so really do them a kindness.

2. Good men love their worst enemies. *The just*, whom the bloody men hate, *seek their soul*, pray for their conversion, and would gladly do any thing for their salvation. This Christ taught us, *Father, forgive them*. *The just seek his soul*, i. e. the soul of the upright, whom the bloody hate, so it is commonly understood; seek to protect it from violence, and save it from, or avenge it at the hands of *the blood-thirsty*.

11. A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.

Note, 1. It is a piece of weakness to be open. He is a *fool* that *uttereth all his mind*, that tells every thing he knows, and hath in his mouth presently whatever he has in his thoughts, and can keep no counsel; that, whatever is started in discourse, shoots his bolt presently; that, when he is provoked, will say any thing that comes uppermost, whoever is reflected upon by it; that, when he is to speak of any business, will say all he thinks, and yet never thinks he saith enough, whether choice or refuse, corn or chaff, pertinent or impertinent, you shall have it all.

2. It is a piece of wisdom to be upon the reserve. *A wise man* will not *utter all his mind* presently, but will take time for a second thought, or reserve the present thought for a fitter time, when it will be more pertinent, and likely to answer his intention; will not deliver himself in a continued speech, or stretched discourse, but with pauses, that he may hear what is to be objected, and answer it. *Non minus interdum oratorium est tacere quam dicere*. Plin. Ep. 7. 6.

12. If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked.

Note, 1. It is a great sin in any, especially in rulers, to *hearken to lies*, for thereby they not only give a wrong judgment themselves of persons and things, according to the lies they give credit to, but they encourage others to give them wrong informations: Lies will be told to those that will hearken to them; but the receiver, in this case, is as bad as the thief.

2. Those that do so will have *all their servants wicked*; all their servants will appear wicked, for they will have lies told of them; and they will be wicked, for they will tell lies to them: All that have their ear, will fill their ear with slanders, and false characters and representations; and so if princes as well as people will be deceived, they shall be deceived, and, instead of devolving the guilt of their own false judgments upon their servants that misinformed them, they must share in their servants guilt; and on them will much of the blame lie for encouraging such misinformations, and giving countenance and ear to them.

13. The poor and the deceitful man meet together: the LORD lightneth both their eyes.

This shews how wisely the great God serves the designs of his providence, by persons of very different tempers, capacities, and conditions in the world, even,

1. By those that are contrary the one to the other: Some are *poor*, and forced to borrow, others are rich; have a great deal of *the mammon of unrighteousness*, *deceitful riches* they are called; and they are creditors, or *usurers*, as it is in the margin: Some are *poor*, and honest, and laborious, others rich, slothful, and *deceitful*; they *meet together* in the business of this world, and have dealings with one another, and *the Lord enlightneth both their eyes*, he causeth his sun to shine upon both, and gives them both the comforts of this life; to some of both sorts he gives his grace; he enlightens the eyes of the *poor*, by giving them patience, and of the *deceitful*, by giving them repentance, as Zaccheus.

2. By those that we think could best be spared. *The poor and the deceitful* we are ready to look upon as blemishes of providence, but God makes even them to serve the beauty of providence; he has wise ends not only in leaving *the poor* always with us, but in permitting *the deceived and the deceiver*, for both are his, Job xii. 16. and turn to his praise.

14. The king that faithfully judgeth the poor, his throne shall be established for ever.

Here is, 1. The duty of magistrates; and that is to judge faithfully between man and man, and to determine all causes brought before them, according to truth and equity; particularly to take care of *the poor*; not to countenance them in an unjust cause for the sake of their poverty, *Exod. xxiii. 3.* but to see that their poverty do not turn to their prejudice if they have a just cause. The rich will look to themselves, but *the poor* and needy the prince must defend, *Psal. lxxxi. 3.* and plead for, *Prov. xxxi. 9.*

2. The happiness of those magistrates that do their duty; their *throne of honour*, their tribunal of judgment, *shall be established for ever*. This will secure to them the favour of God, and strengthen their interest in the affections of their people, both which will be the establishment of their power, and help to transmit it to posterity, and perpetuate it in the family.

15. The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself, bringeth his mother to shame.

Parents, in educating their children, must consider;

1. The benefit of due correction. They must not only tell their children what is good and evil; but they must chide them and correct them too if need be, when they either neglect that which is good, or do that which is evil. If a *reproof* will serve without *the rod* it is well, but *the rod* must never be used without a rational and grave *reproof*; and then, though it may be a present uneasiness both to the father and to the child, yet it will *give wisdom*. *Vexatio dat intellectum*. The child will take warning, and so will get *wisdom*.

2. The mischief of undue indulgence. *A child* that is not restrained or reproofed, but is *left to himself*, as Adonijah was, to follow his own inclinations, he may do well if he will, but if he take ill courses no body will hinder him, it is a thousand to one he proves a disgrace to his family, and *brings his mother*, that fondled him and humoured him in his licentiousness, *to shame*, to poverty, to reproach; and, perhaps, will himself be abusive to her, and give her ill language.

16. When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth: but the righteous shall see their fall.

Note, 1. The more sinners there are, the more sin there is. *When the wicked*, being countenanced by authority, grow numerous, and walk on every side; no marvel if *transgression increaseth*; as a plague in the country is said to increase, when still more and more are infected with it. *Transgression* grows more impudent and bold, more imperious and threatening, when there are many to keep it in countenance. In the old world, when *men began to multiply*, they began to degenerate, and corrupt themselves and one another.

2. The more sin there is, the nearer is the ruin threatened. Let not *the righteous* have their faith and hope shocked by the increase of sin and sinners, let them not say they have *cleansed their hands in vain*; or that *God has forsaken the earth*, but wait with patience, the transgressors shall fall, the measure of their iniquity will be full, and then they shall fall from their dignity and power, and fall into disgrace and destruction, and *the righteous shall have the satisfaction of seeing their fall*, *Psal. xxxvii. 34.* perhaps, in this world; however, in the judgment of the great day, when the fall of God's implacable enemies will be the joy and triumph of glorified saints. See *Isa. lxvi. 24.* *Gen. xix. 28.*

17. Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest: yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.

Note, 1. It is a very happy thing when children prove the comfort of their parents; good children are so, they *give them rest*, make them easy, and free from the many cares they have had concerning them; *yea, they give delight unto their souls*. It is a pleasure to parents, which none knows but they that are blessed with it, to see the happy fruit of the good education they have given their children, and to have a prospect of their well doing for both worlds; it *gives delight* proportionable to the many thoughts of heart that have been concerning them.

2. In order to this, children must be trained up under a strict discipline, and not suffered to do what they will, and to go without rebuke when they do amiss. The foolishness bound up in their hearts, must by correction be driven out when they are young, or it will break out to their own and their parents shame when they are grown up.

18. Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

See here, 1. The misery of the people that wants a settled ministry: *Where there is no vision*, no prophets to expound the law, no priests or Levites to teach the good knowledge of the Lord, no means of grace, the word of the Lord is scarce, there is *no open vision*, *1 Sam. iii. 1.* where it is so, *the people perish*; the word has many significations which will any of them suit well enough; (1.) *The people are made naked*, stripped of their ornaments, and so exposed to shame; stripped of their armour, and so exposed to danger. How base doth a place look without bibles and ministers, and what an easy prey is it to the enemy of souls? (2.) *The people rebel*, not only against God, but against their prince; good preaching would make people good subjects; but for want of it they are turbulent and factious, and *despise dominions*, because they know no better. (3.) *The people are idle*, or, *they play*, as the scholars are apt to do when the master is absent; they do nothing to any good

good purpose, but stand all the day idle, and sporting in the market-place, for want of instruction what to do, and how to do it. (4.) *They are scattered as sheep having no shepherd*, for want of the masters of assemblies to call them and keep them together, *Mark vi. 34.* They are scattered from God and their duty by apostasies, from one another by divisions; God is provoked to scatter them by his judgments, *2 Chron. xv. 3; 5.* (5.) *They perish*; they are *destroyed for lack of knowledge*, *Hof. iv. 6.* See what reason we have to be thankful to God for the plenty of *open vision* which we enjoy!

2. The felicity of a people that has not only a settled but a successful ministry among them; the people that heareth and keepeth the law, among whom religion is uppermost, *happy is that people*, and every particular person among them. It is not having the law, but obeying it, and living up to it, that will entitle us to blessedness.

19. A servant will not be corrected by words: for though he understand, he will not answer.

Here is the description of an unprofitable, slothful, wicked servant, a slave, that serves not for conscience or love, but purely for fear. Let those that have such servants, put on patience to bear the vexation, and not disturb themselves at it. See their character.

1. No rational words will work upon them; they will not be corrected and reformed, not brought to their business, nor cured of their idleness and laziness, by fair means, no, nor by foul words; even the most gentle master will be forced to use severity with them; no reason will serve their turn, for they are unreasonable.

2. No rational words will be got from them; but they are dogged and sullen; and though they understand the questions you ask them, they will not give you an answer; though you make it never so plain to them, what you expect from them, they will not promise you to mend what is amiss, nor to mind their business. See the folly of such servants, whose mouth, by their silence calleth for strokes; they might be corrected by words, and save blows, but they will not.

20. Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him.

Solomon here shews that there is little hopes of bringing a man to wisdom that is hasty, either,

1. Through rashness and inconsideration: *Seest thou a man that is hasty in his matters?* that is of a light, desultory wit, that seems to take a thing quick, but takes it by the halves, gallops over a book or science, but takes no time to digest it, no time to pause or muse upon a business, *there is more hopes of making a scholar, and a wise man, of one that is dull and heavy, and slow in his studies, than of one that hath such a mercurial genius, and cannot fix.*

2. Through pride and conceitedness: *Seest thou a man that is forward to speak to every matter that is started, and affects to speak first to it to open it, and speak last to it to give judgment upon it, as if he were an oracle? there is more hope of a modest fool, who is sensible of his folly, than of such a self-conceited one.*

21. He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child, shall have him become his son at the length.

Note, 1. It is an imprudent thing in a master to be too fond of a servant, to advance him too fast, and admit him to be too familiar with him; to suffer him to be over-nice and curious in his diet, and clothing, and lodging, and so to bring him up delicately, because he is a favourite, and a pretty servant; remember he is a servant, and, by being thus indulged, will be spoiled for any other place. Servants must endure hardness.

2. It is an ungrateful thing in a servant, but what is very common, to carry himself insolently, because he has been used tenderly. The humble prodigal thinks himself unworthy to be called a son, and is content to be a servant; the pampered slave thinks himself too good to be called a servant, and will be a son at the length, will take his ease and liberty, will be hail fellow with his master, and, perhaps, pretend to the inheritance. Let masters give their servants that which is equal, and fit for them, and neither more nor less. This is very applicable to the body, which is a servant to the soul; those that delicately bring up the body, that humour it, and are over-tender of it, it will at length forget its place, and become a son, a master, a perfect tyrant.

22. An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.

See here the mischief that flows from an angry, passionate, furious disposition.

1. It makes men provoking to one another. *An angry man stirreth up strife*, is troublesome and quarrelsome in the family, in the neighbourhood, blows the coals, and even forceth those to fall out with him, that would live peaceably and quietly by him.

2. It makes men provoking to God. *A furious man*, that is wedded to his humours and passions, cannot but abound in transgressions; that is a sin that is the cause of many sins; it not only hinders men from calling upon God's name, but it occasions their swearing and cursing, and profaning God's name.

23. A mans pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.

This agrees with what Christ said more than once,

1. That those who exalt themselves shall be abased. They that think to gain respect by lifting up themselves above their rank, by looking high, talking big, appearing fine, and applauding themselves, will, on the contrary, expose themselves to contempt, lose their reputation, and provoke God, by humbling providences, to bring them down, and lay them low.

2. That those who humble themselves shall be exalted, and shall be established in their dignity. *Honour shall uphold the humble in spirit*; their humility is their honour, and that shall make them truly and safely great, and recommend them to the esteem of all that are wise and good.

24. Whoso is partner with a thief, hateth his own soul: he heareth cursing, and bewrayeth it not.

See here what sin and ruin they involve themselves in, who are drawn away by the enticement of sinners.

1. They incur a great deal of guilt: He doth so that goes partner with such as rob and defraud, and casts in his lot among them, *Prov. i. 11, &c.* the receiver is as bad as the thief: And being drawn in to join with him, in the commission of the sin, he cannot escape joining with him in the concealment of it, though it be with the most horrid perjuries and execrations: They hear cursing, when they are sworn to tell the whole truth, but they will not confess.

2. They hasten to utter ruin: They even hate their own souls, for they wilfully do that which will be the inevitable destruction of them. See the absurdities sinners are guilty of; they love death, than which nothing more dreadful, and hate their own souls, than which nothing more dear.

25. The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD, shall be safe.

Here, 1. We are cautioned not to dread the power of man; neither the power of a prince, nor the power of the multitude; both are formidable enough, but the slavish fear of either brings a snare, i. e. exposeth men to many insults; some take a pride in terrifying the timorous; or rather exposeth men to many temptations: Abraham, for fear of man, denied his wife, and Peter his Master, and many a one his God and religion. We must not balk duty, or commit sin, to avoid the wrath of man, nor, though we see it coming upon us, be disquieted with fear, *Dan. iii. 16. Psalm cxviii. 6.* he must himself die, *Isa. li. 12.* and can but kill our body, *Luke xii. 5.*

2. We are encouraged to depend upon the power of God, which would keep us from all that fear of man which hath either torment or temptation in it. *Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord*, for protection and supply in the way of duty, he shall be set on high, above the power of man, and above the fear of that power. A holy confidence in God makes a man both great and easy, and enables him to look with a gracious contempt upon the most formidable designs of hell and earth against him. If God be my salvation, *I will trust, and not be afraid.*

26. Many seek the rulers favour, but every mans judgment cometh from the LORD.

See here, 1. What is the common course men take to advance and enrich themselves, and make themselves great: They seek the ruler's favour, and, as if all their judgment did proceed from him, to him they make all their court. Solomon was himself a ruler, and knew with what sedulity men made their application to him, some on one errand, others on another, but all for his favour; it is the way of the world to make an interest with great men, and expect much from the smiles of second causes, which yet are uncertain, and frequently disappoint them. Many take a great deal of pains in seeking the ruler's favour, and yet cannot have it; many have it for a little while, but they cannot keep themselves in it, by some little turn or other they are brought under his displeasure; many have it and keep it, and yet it doth not answer their expectation, they cannot make that hand of it that they promised themselves they should. Haman had the ruler's favour, and yet it availed him nothing.

2. What is the wisest course men can take to be happy; let them look up to God, and seek the favour of the Ruler of rulers; for every man's judgment proceedeth from the Lord: It is not with us as the ruler will; his favour cannot make us happy, his frowns cannot make us miserable; but it is as God will; every creature

is that to us that God makes it to be, no more, and no other; he is the first cause on which all second causes depend; if he help not, they cannot, 2 Kings vi. 27. Job xxxiv. 29.

27. An unjust man is an abomination to the just: and he that is upright in the way, is abomination to the wicked.

This speaks not only the innate contrariety that there is between virtue and vice, as between light and darkness, fire and water, but the old enmity that has always been between the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent, Gen. iii. 15.

1. All that are sanctified have a rooted antipathy to wickedness and wicked people; they have a good will to the souls of all, God hath so, and would have none perish, but they hate the ways and practices of those that are impious towards God, and injurious towards men, they cannot hear of them, or speak of them, without a holy indignation; they loathe the society of the ungodly and unjust, and dread the thought of giving them any countenance, but would do all they could to bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end. Thus an unjust man makes himself odious to the just, and it is one part of his present shame and punishment, that good men cannot endure him.

2. All that are un sanctified have a like rooted antipathy to godliness and godly people. He that is upright in the way, that makes conscience of what he saith and doth, is an abomination to the wicked, whose wickedness is restrained, perhaps, and suppressed; or, however, shamed and condemned by the uprightness of the upright. Thus Cain did, who was of his father the devil. And this is not only the wickedness of the wicked, that they hate those whom God loves, but their misery too, that they hate those whom they shall shortly see in everlasting bliss and honour, and who shall have dominion over them in the morning, Psalm xlix. 14.

C H A P. XXX.

This and the following chapter are an appendix to Solomon's proverbs; but they are both expressly called prophecies, in the first verses of both; by which it appears, that the penmen of them, whoever they were, were divinely inspired. This chapter was penned by one that bears the name of Agur Ben Jakeh; what tribe he was of, or when he lived, we are not told: What he wrote, being indited by the holy Ghost, is here kept upon record. We have here, 1. His confession of faith, ver. 1,—6. 2. His prayer, ver. 7,—9. 3. A caution against wronging servants, ver. 10. 4. Four wicked generations, ver. 11,—14. 5. Four things insatiable, ver. 15, 16. to which is added, fair warning to undutiful children, ver. 17. 6. Four things unsearchable, ver. 18,—20. 7. Four things intolerable, ver. 21,—23. 8. Four things little and wise, ver. 24,—28. 9. Four things stately, ver. 29. ad fin.

1. **T**HE words of Agur the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy: the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal. 2. Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. 3. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy. 4. Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his sons name, if thou canst tell? 5. Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. 6. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

Some make Agur to be not the name of this author but his character; he was a collector, so it signifies; a gatherer; one that did not compose things himself, but collected the wise sayings and observations of others; made abstracts of others writings; which some think is the reason why he saith, ver. 3. I have not learned wisdom my self, but have been a scribe or amanuensis to other wise and learned men. Note, We must not bury our talent, though it be but one, but as we have received the gift, so minister the same, if it be but to collect what others have written. But we rather suppose it to be his name, which, no doubt, was well known then, though not mentioned elsewhere in scripture.

Ithiel and Ucal are mentioned, either,

1. As the names of his pupils, whom he instructed, or who consulted him as an oracle, having a great opinion of his wisdom and goodness. Probably, they wrote from him what he dictated, as Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah, and by their means it was preserved, and they were ready to attest it to be his, for it was spoken to them; they were two witnesses of it. Or,

2. As the subject of his discourse; Ithiel signifies God with me, the application of Immanuel, God with us. The Word calls him God with us, faith appropriates this, and calls him God with me,

who loved me; and gave himself for me, and into union and communion with whom I am admitted. Ucal signifies the Mighty one, for it is upon one that is mighty that help is laid for us. Many good interpreters apply this therefore to the Messiah; for to him all the prophecies bare witness, and why not this then? It is what Agur spake concerning Ithiel, even concerning Ithiel (that is the name on which the stress is laid) and Ucal. The mighty God, Isa. ix. 6. with us, Isa. vii. 14.

Three things the prophet here aims at,

1. To abase himself. Before he makes confession of his faith, he makes confession of his folly, and the weakness and deficiency of reason, which makes it so necessary that we be guided and governed by faith. Before he speaks concerning the Saviour, he speaks of himself as needing a Saviour, and nothing without him; we must go out of our selves before we go into Jesus Christ.

(1.) He speaks of himself as wanting a righteousness, and having done foolishly, very foolishly. When he reflects upon himself he owns, Surely I am more brutish than any man. Every man is become brutish, Jer. x. 14. But he that knows his own heart, knows so much more evil by himself than he doth by any other, that he cries out, Surely I cannot but think that I am more brutish than any man, sure no man has such a corrupt deceitful heart as I have. I have acted as one that has not the understanding of Adam, as one that is wretchedly degenerated from the knowledge and righteousness in which man was at first created; nay, I have not the common sense and reason of a man, else I had not done as I have done. Agur, when he was applied to by others as wiser than most, acknowledged himself more foolish than any. Whatever high opinion others may have of us, it becomes us to have low thoughts of ourselves.

(2.) He speaks of himself as wanting a revelation to guide him in the ways of truth and wisdom. He owns, ver. 3. I neither learned wisdom by any power of my own, the depths of it cannot be fathomed by my line and plummet, nor know I the knowledge of the holy ones, the angels, our first parents in innocency, nor of the holy things of God, I can get no insight into them, nor make any judgment of them farther than God is pleased to make them known to me; the natural man, the natural powers perceive not, nay, they receive not the things of the Spirit of God. Some suppose Agur to be asked, as Apollo's oracle was of old, Who was the wisest man? answered, He that is sensible of his own ignorance, especially in divine things. Hoc tantum scio me nihil scire.

2. To advance Jesus Christ, and the Father in him, ver. 4. Who hath ascended up into heaven, &c.

(1.) Some understand this of God, and of his works, which are both incomparable and unsearchable. He challengeth all mankind to give an account of the heavens above, of the winds, the waters, the earth, who can pretend to have ascended up to heaven, to take a view of the orbs above, and then to have descended to give us a description of them? Who can pretend to have had the commands of the winds, to have grasped them in his hand, and managed them as God doth, or to have bound the waves of the sea with a swaddling band, as God has done? Who hath established the ends of the earth, or can describe the strength of its foundations, or extent of its limits? Tell me what is the man's name, who can undertake to vie with God, or to be of his cabinet council, or, if he be dead, what is his name to whom he has bequeathed this great secret.

(2.) Others refer it to Christ, to Ithiel, and Ucal, the Son of God, for it is the Son's name as well as the Father's that is here enquired after, and a challenge given to any to compare with him. We now must exalt Christ as one revealed, they then magnified him as one concealed; as one they had heard something of, but had very dark and defective ideas of; We have heard the fame of him with our ears, but cannot describe him, Job xxviii. 22. certainly it is God that has gathered the winds in his fists, and bound the waters as in a garment; but what is his name? It is, I am that I am, Exod. iii. 14. a name to be adored, not to be understood: What is his Son's name, by whom he doth all these things? The old testament saints expected the Messiah to be the Son of the Blessed, and he is here spoken of as a person distinct from the Father, but his name as yet secret. Note, The great Redeemer in the glories of his providence and grace, can neither be paralleled, nor found out to perfection. 1. The glories of the kingdom of his grace are unsearchable and unparallelled; for who but he hath ascended into heaven and descended? Who, but he, is perfectly acquainted with both worlds, and has himself a free correspondence with both, and is therefore fit to settle a correspondence between them, as Mediator, as Jacob's ladder: He was in heaven in the Father's bosom, John i. 1. 18. thence he descended to take our nature upon him; and never was there such condescension! And in that nature he again ascended, Eph. iv. 9. to receive the promised glories of his exalted state; and who but he has done this? Rom. x. 5. 2. The glories of the kingdom of his providence are likewise unsearchable and unparallelled. The same that reconciles heaven and earth was the Creator of both, and governs and disposes of all. The three lower elements of air, water, and earth, he here instanteth in his government of. (1.) The motions of the air are of his directing; Satan pretends to be the prince of the power of the air, but even there Christ has all power, he rebuked

the winds and they obeyed him. (2.) The bounds of the water are of his appointing; he binds them as in a garment; hitherto they shall come, and no further, Job xxxviii. 9, 10, 11. (3.) The foundations of the earth are of his establishing; he founded it at first, he upholds it still: if Christ had not interposed, the foundations of the earth had sunk under the load of the curse upon the ground for man's sin. Who, and what is the mighty He that doth all this? We cannot find out God, nor the Son of God unto perfection. O the depth of that knowledge!

3. To assure us of the truth of the Word of God, and to recommend it to us, ver. 5, 6. Agur's pupils expect to be instructed by him in the things of God: Alas, saith he, I cannot undertake to instruct you, go to the Word of God, see what he hath there revealed of himself, and of his mind and will, you need know no more than what that will teach you, and that you may rely upon, as sure and sufficient: Every word of God is pure; there is not the least mixture of falshood and corruption in it: The words of men are to be heard and read with a jealousy, and with an allowance, but there is not the least ground to suspect any deficiency in the Word of God; it is as silver purified seven times, Psal. xii. 6. without the least dross or alloy; Thy Word is very pure, Psal. cxix. 140.

1. It is sure, and therefore we must trust to it, and venture our souls upon it. God in his word, God in his promise, is a shield, a sure protection to all them that put themselves under his protection, and put their trust in him. The Word of God, applied by faith, will make us easy in the midst of the greatest dangers, Psal. xli. 1, 2.

2. It is sufficient, and therefore we must not add to it, ver. 6. Add thou not unto his words, because they are pure and perfect. This forbids not only the advancing of any thing in contradiction to the Word of God, but in competition with it; though it be under the plausible pretence of explaining it, yet if it pretend to be of equal authority with it, it is adding to his words, which is not only a reproach to them as insufficient, but opens a door to all manner of errors and corruptions; for that one absurdity granted, that the word of any man, or company of men, is to be received with the same faith and veneration as the Word of God, a thousand follow. We must be content with what God has thought fit to make known to us of his mind, and not covet to be wise above what is written; for, (1.) God will resent it as an heinous affront, he will reprove thee, will reckon with thee as a traitor against his crown and dignity, and lay thee under the heavy doom of those that add to his Words, or diminish from them, Deut. iv. 32. — xii. 32. (2.) We shall run ourselves into endless mistakes; thou wilt be found a liar, a corrupter of the word of Truth, a broacher of heresies, and guilty of the worst of forgeries, counterfeiting the broad seal of heaven, and pretending a divine mission and inspiration, when it is all a cheat. Men may be thus deceived, but God is not mocked.

7. Two things have I required of thee, deny me them not before I die. 8. Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: 9. Left I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or left I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

After Agur's confession and creed, here follows his litany: where we may observe,

1. The preface to his prayer: Two things have I required, that is, requested of thee, O God. Before we go to pray, it is good to consider what we need, and what the things are which we have to ask of God. What doth our case require? What do our hearts desire? What would we that God should do for us? that we may not be to seek for our petition and request when we should be presenting it. He begs, Deny me not before I die: in praying we should think of dying, and pray accordingly: Lord, give me pardon, and peace, and grace, before I die, before I go hence, and be no more; for if I be not renewed and sanctified before I die, it will not be done after; if I do not prevail in prayer before I die, prayers after will not prevail, no, not Lord, Lord. There is none of this wisdom or working in the grave. Deny me not thy grace, for if thou do, I die, I perish, if thou be silent to me, I am like them that go down to the pit, Psal. xxviii. 1. Deny me not before I die, i. e. as long as I continue in the land of the living, let me continue under the conduct of thy grace and good providence.

2. The prayer itself: The two things he requires, grace sufficient, and food convenient.

1. Grace sufficient for his soul. Remove from me vanity and lies, i. e. deliver me from sin, from all corrupt principles, practices and affections; from error and mistake, which is at the bottom of all sin; from the love of the world and the things of it, which are all vanity and a lie. Some understand it as a prayer for the pardon of sin, for when God forgives sin he removes it, he takes it away. Or rather, it is a prayer of the same import with that, Lead us not into temptation. Nothing is more mischievous to us than sin, and therefore nothing which we should more earnestly pray against, that we may do no evil,

2. Food convenient for his body. Having prayed for the operations of divine grace, he here begs the favours of the divine providence, but such as may tend to the good, and not the prejudice of the soul.

1. He prays, that of God's free gift, he might receive a competent portion of the good things of this life: Feed me with the bread of my allowance; such bread as thou thinkest fit to allow me; for as to all the gifts of the divine providence, we must refer ourselves to the divine wisdom. Or, the bread that is fit for me, as a man, a master of a family; that which is agreeable to my rank and condition in the world, for as is the man so is his competency: Our Saviour seems to refer to this, when he teacheth us to pray, Give us this day our daily bread; as this seems to refer to Jacob's vow, in which he wished for no more but bread to eat and raiment to put on. Food convenient for us is what we ought to be content with, though we have not dainties, varieties, and superfluities; what is for necessity, though we have not for delight and ornament; and it is what we may in faith pray for, and depend upon God for.

2. He prays that he may be kept from every condition of life that would be a temptation to him.

(1.) He prays against the extremes of abundance and want, Give me neither poverty nor riches: He doth not hereby prescribe to God, nor pretend to teach him what condition he shall allot to him, nor doth he pray against poverty or riches absolutely, as in themselves evil, for either of them, by the grace of God, may be sanctified, and be a means of good to us; but, 1. He hereby intends to express the value which wise and good men have for a middle state of life, and, with submission to the will of God, desires that that might be his state; neither great honour nor great contempt. We must learn how to manage both, as St. Paul, Phil. iv. 12. but rather wish to be always between both. Optimus pecunie modus qui nec in paupertatem cedit, nec procul a paupertate discedit. Seneca. 2. He hereby intimates a holy jealousy he had of himself, that he could not keep his ground against the temptations either of an afflicted or prosperous condition. Others may preserve their integrity in either, but he is afraid of both, and therefore grace teacheth him to pray against riches, as much as nature against poverty, but the will of the Lord be done.

(2.) He gives a pious reason for his prayer, ver. 9. he doth not say, Left I be rich and cumbered with care, and envied by my neighbours, and eaten up with a multitude of servants. Or, Left I be poor and trampled on, and forced to work hard and fare hard, but left I be rich and sin, or, poor and sin. Sin is that which a good man is afraid of in every condition, and under every event; witness Nehemiah chap. vi. 13. that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin.

1. He dreads the temptation of a prosperous condition, and therefore even deprecates that; Left I be full and deny thee, as Jeshurun that waxed fat, and kicked and forsook God that made him, Deut. xxxii. 15. and say, as Pharaoh in his pride, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? Prosperity makes people proud, and forgetful of God, as if they had no need of him, and were therefore under no obligation to him. What can the Almighty do for them? Job xxii. 17. and therefore they will do nothing for him. Even good men are afraid of the worst sins, so deceitful do they think their own hearts to be; and they know that the greatest gains of the world will not balance the least guilt.

2. He dreads the temptations of a poor condition, and for that reason, and no other, deprecates that, left I be poor and steal. Poverty is a strong temptation to dishonesty, and such as many are overcome by, and are ready to think it will be their excuse; but it will not bear them out at God's bar, no more than at men's, to say I stole because I was poor; yet if a man steal for the satisfying of his soul when he is hungry, it is a case of compassion, Pro. vi. 30. and what even those that have some principles of honesty in them may be drawn to. But observe why Agur dreads this, not because he should endanger himself by it, left I steal and be hanged for it, whipt or put in the stocks, or sold for a bondman, as among the Jews poor thieves were, who had not wherewithal to make restitution: but lest he should dishonour God by it, left I should steal, and take the name of my God in vain, i. e. discredit my profession of religion, by practices disagreeable to it. Or, left I steal, and when I am charged with it, forswear myself. He therefore dreads one sin, because it would draw on another, for the way of sin is down-hill. Observe, He calls God, his God, and therefore he is afraid of doing any thing to offend him, because of the relation he stands in to him.

10. Accuse not a servant unto his master, lest he curse thee, and thou be found guilty. 11. There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother. 12. There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness. 13. There is a generation how lofty are their eyes! and their eye-lids are lifted up. 14. There is a generation whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw-teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.

Here is, 1. A caution not to abuse other peoples servants; no more than our own, nor to make mischief between them and their masters, for it is an ill office, invidious, and what will make a man odious, *ver. 10.* Consider, (1.) It is an injury to the servant; whose poor condition makes him an object of pity, and therefore it is barbarous to add affliction to him that is afflicted. *Hurt not a servant with thy tongue,* so the margin reads it, for it argues a fordid disposition to smite any body secretly with the scourge of the tongue; especially a servant that is not a match for us; and whom we should rather protect, if his master be severe with him, than exasperate him more. (2.) It will, perhaps, be an injury to thy self; if a servant be thus provoked, perhaps he will curse thee; will accuse thee and bring thee into trouble; or give thee an ill word and blemish thy reputation; or appeal to God against thee, and imprecate his wrath upon thee, who is the patron and protector of oppressed innocency.

2. An account upon occasion of this caution of some wicked generations of men, that are justly abominable to all that are virtuous and good:

(1.) Such as are abusive to their parents, give them ill language, and wish them ill, call them ill names, and do them ill turns; there is a generation of such, young men of that black character commonly herd together, and irritate one another against their parents, a generation of *vipers* they are, who curse either their natural parents, or their magistrates, or ministers, because they cannot endure the yoke: and they are near of kin to them, who, though they are not yet arrived to such a pitch of wickedness as to curse their parents, yet do not bless them, cannot give them a good word, and will not pray for them.

(2.) Such as are conceited of themselves, and under a shew and pretence of sanctity hide from others, and, perhaps, themselves too, abundance of reigning wickedness in secret, *ver. 12.* they are *pure in their own eyes*, as if they were in all respects such as they should be, they have a very good opinion of themselves and their own character, that they are not only righteous, but *rich and increased with goods*, *Rev. iii. 17.* and yet *are not cleansed from their filthiness*, the filthiness of their hearts, which they pretend to be the best part of them; they are, it may be, swept and garnished, but they are not washed, not sanctified; as the Pharisees that within were full of all uncleanness, *Matt. xxiii. 25, 26.*

(3.) Such as are haughty and scornful to those about them, *ver. 13.* he speaks of them with amazement at their intolerable pride and insolence, *O how lofty are their eyes!* with what disdain do they look upon their neighbours, as not worthy to be set with the dogs of their flock, what a distance do they expect every body should keep; and when they look upon themselves, how do they strut and vaunt, like a peacock, thinking they make themselves illustrious, when really they make themselves ridiculous. There is a generation of such, on whom he that *resists the proud* will pour contempt.

(4.) Such as are cruel to the poor, and barbarous to all that lie at their mercy, *ver. 14.* their teeth are iron and steel, *swords and knives*, instruments of cruelty with which they devour the poor with the greatest pleasure imaginable, and as greedily as hungry men cut their meat and eat it. God has so ordered it, that the *poor we should always have with us*, that they shall never cease out of the land; but there are those who, because they hate to relieve them, would, if they could, abolish them from the earth, from among men; especially God's poor. Some understand it of those who wound and ruin others by slanders and false accusations, and severe censures of their everlasting state; their tongues and their teeth too (which are like organs of speech) are *as swords and knives*, *Psal. lvii. 4.*

15. The horseleech hath two daughters, crying, Give, give. There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things, say not, *It is enough!* 16. The grave, and the barren womb, the earth that is not filled with water, and the fire that saith not, *It is enough.* 17. The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.

He had spoken before of those that devoured the poor, *ver. 14.* and had spoken of them last, as the worst of all the four generations there mentioned, now here he speaks of their insatiableness in doing this. The temper that puts them upon it is made up of cruelty and covetousness; now those are two daughters of the horseleech, its genuine offspring that still cry, *Give, give, give* more blood, give more money; for the bloody are still blood-thirsty, being drunk with blood, they add thirst to their drunkenness, and will seek it yet again. They also that *love silver* shall never be satisfied with silver. Thus, while from these two principles they are devouring the poor, they are continually uneasy to themselves, as David's enemies, *Psal. lix. 14, 15.*

Now, 1. For the further illustration of this, he instanceth in four other things which are insatiable, to which those devourers are compared, which say not, *It is enough.* Or, *It is wealth;* those are No. 51.

never rich that are always coveting. Now these four things are always craving. (1.) The grave, into which multitudes fall, and yet still more will fall, and it swallows them all up and returns none. *Hell and destruction are never full*, *Prov. xxvii. 20;* when it comes to our turn we shall find the grave ready for us, *Job xvii. 1.* (2.) The barren womb, which is impatient of its affliction in being barren, and cries; as Rachel did, *Give me children.* (3.) The parched ground in time of drought, especially in those hot countries, which still soaks in the rain that comes in abundance upon it; and in a little time wants more. (4.) The fire which, when it has consumed abundance of fuel, yet still devours all the combustible matter that is thrown into it. So insatiable are the corrupt desires of sinners; and so little satisfaction have they in the gratification of them.

2. He adds a terrible threatening to disobedient children, *ver. 17.* for warning to the first of those four wicked generations that curse their parents; *ver. 11.* and shews here, 1. Who they are that belong to that generation; not only they that curse their parents in heat and passion, but, (1.) They that mock at them, though it be with a scornful eye, looking with disdain upon them, because of their bodily infirmities; or looking sour or dogged at them when they instruct or command, impatient at their checks, and angry at them. God takes notice with what eye children look upon their parents, and will reckon for the leering look and the casts of an evil eye, as well as for ill language given them. (2.) They that despise to obey them, that think it a thing below them to be dutiful to their parents, especially to the mother; they scorn to be controlled by her; and thus she that bare them in sorrow, in greater sorrow bears their manners.

3. What their doom will be. They that dishonour their parents shall be set up as monuments of God's vengeance; they shall be hanged in chains; as it were, for the birds of prey to pick out their eyes, those eyes with which they looked so scornfully on their good parents. The dead bodies of malefactors were not to hang all night; but before night the ravens would have picked out their eyes. If men do not punish undutiful children, God will, and will load those with the greatest infamy that carry themselves haughtily towards their parents. Many that have come to an ignominious end, have owned that the wicked courses that brought them to it began in a contempt of their parents authority.

18. There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not: 19. The way of an eagle in the air, the way of a serpent upon a rock, the way of a ship in the midst of the sea, and the way of a man with a maid. 20. Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness. 21. For three things the earth is disquieted, and for four which it cannot bear: 22. For a servant when he reigneth, and a fool when he is filled with meat, 23. For an odious woman when she is married, and an handmaid that is heir to her mistress.

Here is, 1. An account of four things that are unsearchable, too wonderful to be fully known. And here,

1. The three first are natural things, and are only designed as comparisons for the illustration of the last. We cannot trace, (1.) *An eagle in the air*, which way she is flown cannot be discovered, either by the footstep, or by the scent, as the way of a beast may upon the ground; nor can we account for the wonderful swiftness of her flight, how soon she is gone beyond our ken. (2.) *A serpent upon a rock*: The way of a serpent in the sand we may find by the track, but not of a serpent upon the hard rock; nor can we describe how a serpent will, without feet, in a little time, creep to the top of a rock. (3.) *A ship in the midst of the sea*: The leviathan indeed makes a path to shine after him, one would think the deep to be hoary, *Job xli. 32.* but a ship leaves no mark behind it, and sometimes it is so tossed upon the waves, that one would wonder how it lives at sea and gains its point. The kingdom of nature is full of wonders; marvellous things which the God of nature doth, *past finding out.*

2. The fourth is a mystery of iniquity, more unaccountable than any of these; it belongs to the depths of Satan, that deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart which none can know, *Jer. xvii. 9.* It is twofold,

1. The cursed arts which a vile adulterer hath to debauch a maid, and to persuade her to yield to his wicked and abominable lust; this is what a wanton poet wrote a whole book of long since, *De arte amandi*; with what pretensions and protestations of love, and all its powerful charms, promises of marriage, assurances of secrecy and reward, is many an unwary virgin brought to sell her virtue, and honour, and peace, and soul, and all to a base traitor, for so all sinful lust is in the kingdom of love. The more artfully the temptation is managed, the more watchful and resolute ought every pure heart to be against it.

2. The cursed arts which a vile adulteress hath to conceal her wickedness, especially from her husband, from whom she treacherously

roufully departs; so close are her intrigues with her lewd companions, and so craftily disguised, that it is as impossible to discover her as to track an eagle in the air. She eat the forbidden fruit, after the similitude of Adam's transgression, and then *wipes her mouth* that it may not betray itself, and, with a bold and impudent face, saith, *I have done no wickedness*. (1.) To the world she denies the fact, and is ready to swear it, that she is as chaste and modest as any woman, and never did that wickedness she is suspected of. They are works of darkness which are industriously kept from coming to the light. (2.) To her own conscience (if she have any left) she denies the fault, and will not own that that *great wickedness* is any wickedness at all, but an innocent entertainment. See *Hos. xii. 7, 8*. Thus multitudes ruine their souls by calling evil good, and out-facing their convictions with a self-justification.

3. An account of four things that are intolerable, that is, four sorts of persons that are very troublesome to the places where they live, and the relations and companies they are in, the earth is *disturbed for them*, and groans under them as a burthen it cannot bear, and they are all much alike. (1.) *A servant* when he is advanced and intrusted with power, who is of all other most insolent and imperious; witness Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, *Neh. ii. 10*. (2.) *A fool*, a filly, rude, boisterous, vicious man, when he is grown rich, and has got his belly full and his head full too at a good dinner, he will disturb all the company with his extravagant talk, and the affronts he will put upon those about him. (3.) An ill-natured, cross-grained woman, when she gets a husband, who, having made herself odious by her pride and founess, so that one would not have thought any body should have loved her; yet, if at last she be married, that honourable estate makes her more intolerably scornful and spiteful than ever. It is pity that which should sweeten the disposition should have a contrary effect. A gracious woman, when she is married, will be yet more obliging. (4.) An old maid-servant that has prevailed with her mistress, by humouring her and getting the length of her foot, to leave her what she has, or is as dear to her as if she was to be her heir, such a one likewise will be intolerably proud and malicious, and think all too little that her mistress gives her, and herself wronged if any thing be left from her. Let those therefore whom providence has advanced to honour from mean beginnings, carefully watch against that sin which will most easily beset them, pride and haughtiness, which will in them, of all others, be most insufferable and inexcusable, and let them humble themselves with the remembrance of the rock out of which they were hewn.

24. There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise: 25. The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in summer; 26. The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks: 27. The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands; 28. The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings palaces.

Agur having instanced in four things that seem great, and yet are really contemptible, here instanceth in four things that are little to see to, and yet are very admirable, great in miniature: in which, as bishop Patrick observes, he teacheth us several good lessons; as, 1. Not to admire bodily bulk, or beauty, or strength, or to value persons for that, or think the better of them, but to judge of men by their wisdom and conduct, their industry and application to business, which are characters that deserve respect. 2. To admire the wisdom and power of the Creator in the smallest and most despicable animals, in an ant as much as in an elephant. 3. To blame ourselves who do not act so much for our own interest as the meanest creatures do for theirs. 4. Not to despise the weak things of the world; there are those that are little upon the earth, poor in the world, and of small account, and yet are exceeding wise, wise for their souls and another world, and those are exceeding wise, wiser than their neighbours. *Marg. They are wise, made wise* by the special instinct of nature; all that are wise to salvation are made wise by the grace of God. Those he instanceth in are,

1. The ants, minute animals and very weak, and yet they are very industrious in gathering proper food, and have a strange sagacity to do it in the summer, the proper time: this is so great a piece of wisdom, that we may learn of them to be wise for futurity, *Prov. vi. 6*. When the ravening lions lack and suffer hunger, the laborious ants have plenty and know no want.

2. The conies, or, as some rather understand it, the Arabian mice, field-mice, weak creatures, and very timorous, yet they have so much wisdom as to make their houses in the rocks, where they are well guarded, and their feebleness makes them take shelter in those natural fastnesses and fortifications. Sense of our own indigence and weakness should drive us to him that is a rock higher than we, for shelter and support, there let us make our habitation.

3. The locusts, they are little also, and have no king, as the bees have, but they go forth all of them by bands, like an army in battle-

array; and observing such good order among themselves, it is not any inconvenience to them that they have no king. They are called God's great army, *Jos. ii. 25*. for when he pleaseth he musters, he marshals them, and wagemeth war by them, as he did upon Egypt. *They go forth all of them gathered together*; so the margin; sense of weakness should engage us to keep together, that we may strengthen the hands one of another.

4. The spider, an insect, but as great an instance of industry in our houses as the ants are in the field. Spiders are very ingenious in weaving their webs with a fineness and exactness, such as no art can pretend to come near; they take hold with their hands, and spin a fine thread out of their own bowels, with a great deal of art; and they are not only in poor mens cottages, but in kings palaces, notwithstanding all the care that is there taken to destroy them. Providence wonderfully keeps up these species of creatures, not only which men provide not for, but which every man's hand is against, and seeks the destruction of. Those that will mind their business, and take hold of it with their hands, shall be in kings palaces; sooner or later will get preferment, and may go on with it, notwithstanding the difficulties and discouragements they meet with. If one well-spun web be swept away, it is but making another.

29. There be three things which go well, yea, four are comely in going: 30. A lion which is strongest among beasts, and turneth not away for any, 31. A grey-hound, an he-goat also, and a king against whom there is no rising up. 32. If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thy self, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thine hand upon thy mouth. 33. Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood: so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife.

Here is, (1.) An enumeration of four things that are majestic and stately in their going, which look great.

1. A lion, the king of beasts, because strongest among beasts, and among beasts it is strength that gives the preeminence, but it is pity it should do so among men, whose wisdom is their honour, not their strength and force; the lion turns not away, nor alters his pace for fear of any pursuers, since he knows he is too hard for them. Herein the righteous are bold as a lion, that they turn not away from their duty for fear of any difficulty they meet with in it.

2. A grey-hound that is girt in the loins, and fit for running; or, as the margin reads it, a horse, which ought not to be omitted among the creatures that are comely in going, for so he is, especially when he is dressed up in his harness or trappings.

3. A he-goat, the comeliness of whose going is when he goes first, and leads the flock; it is the comeliness of a christian's going, to go first in a good work, and to lead others in the right way.

4. A king, who, when he appears in his majesty, is looked upon with reverence and awe, and all agree, there is no rising up against him, none can compare with him, none can contend with him, whoever doth it, it is at his peril. And if there is no rising up against an earthly prince, woe to him then that strives with his Maker. It is intended that we should learn courage and fortitude in all virtuous actions from the lion, and not to turn away for any difficulty we meet with; from the grey-hound we may learn quickness and dispatch; from the he-goat, the care of our family, and those under our charge; and from a king, to have our children in subjection, with all gravity; and from them all, to go well, and to order the steps of our conversation, so as that we may not only be safe, but comely in going.

(2.) A caution to us to keep our temper at all times, and under all provocations, and to take heed of carrying our resentments too far upon any occasion, especially when there is a king in the case, against whom there is no rising up; when it is a ruler, or one much our superior that is offended; nay, the rule is always the same.

1. We must bridle and suppress our own passion, and take shame to our selves, whenever we are justly charged with a fault, and not insist upon our own innocency. If we have lifted up our selves, either in a proud conceit of our selves, or a peevish opposition to those that are over us; if we have transgressed the laws of our place and station, we have therein done foolishly. Those that magnify themselves over others, or against others, that are haughty and insolent, they do but shame themselves, and betray their own weakness; nay, if we have but thought evil, if we be conscious to our selves that we have harboured an ill design in our minds, or it has been suggested to us, we must lay our hand upon our mouth, i. e.

(1.) We must humble our selves for what we have done amiss, and even lie in the dust before God in sorrow for it, as Job did, when he repented of what he had said foolishly, *chap. xl. 4*. I will lay my hand upon my mouth; and as the convicted leper, put a covering upon his upper lip. If we have done foolishly, we must not stand in it before men, but by silence own our guilt, which will be the best way of appealing those we have offended. (2.) We must keep

keep the evil thought we have conceived in our minds from breaking out in any evil speeches; do not give the evil thought an imprimatur, allow it not to be published, but *lay thy hand upon thy mouth*, use a holy violence with thy self, if need be, and enjoin thy self silence; as Christ *suffered not the evil spirits to speak*. It is bad to think ill, but it is much worse to speak it; for that implies a consent to the evil thought, and a willingness to infect others with it.

2. We must not irritate the passions of others. Some are so very provoking in their words and carriage, that they even *force wrath*, they make those about them angry, whether they will or no, and put them into a passion, who are not only not inclined to it, but resolved against it. Now this *forcing of wrath brings forth strife*, and where that is, *there is confusion, and every evil work*. As the violent agitation of the cream fetcheth all the good out of the milk, and the hard *wringing of the nose* will extort blood from it, so this *forcing of wrath* wastes both the body and spirits of a man, and robs him of all the good that is in him. Or, as it is in the *churning of milk, and the wringing of the nose*, that is done by force, which otherwise would not be done; so the spirit is heated by degrees with strong passions, one angry word begets another, and that a third, one passionate debate makes work for another, and so it goes on, till it ends at length in irreconcilable feuds; let nothing therefore be said or done with violence; but every thing with softness and calmness.

C H A P. XXXI.

This chapter is tacked to Solomon's proverbs, some think, because it is of the same author, supposing king Lemuel to be king Solomon; others, only because it is of the same nature, though left in writing by another author, called Lemuel; however it be, it is a prophecy, and therefore given by inspiration and direction of God; which Lemuel was under in the writing of it, and putting it into this form, as his mother was in dictating to him the matter of it. Here is,

1. An exhortation to Lemuel, a young prince, to take heed of the sins he would be tempted to, and to do the duties of the place he was called to; ver. 1,—9. 2. The description of a virtuous woman, especially in the relation of a wife, and the mistress of a family, which Lemuel's mother drew up, not as an encomium of her self, though, no doubt, it was her own true picture, but either as an instruction to her daughters, as the foregoing verses were to her son, or as a direction to her son in the choice of a wife; she must be chaste and modest, diligent and frugal, dutiful to her husband, careful of her family, discreet in her discourse, and in the education of her children, and, above all, conscientious in her duty to God; such a one as this, if he can find her, will make him happy, ver. 10,—31.

1. **T**HE words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him. 2. What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows? 3. Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings. 4. It is not for kings; O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes strong drink: 5. Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted. 6. Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine to those that be of heavy hearts. 7. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more. 8. Open thy mouth for the dumb, in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. 9. Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.

Most interpreters are of opinion that Lemuel is Solomon; the name signifies one that is for God, or devoted to God; and so it agrees well enough with that honourable name which, by divine appointment, was given to Solomon; 2 Sam. xii. 25. *Jedidiah, beloved of the Lord*. Lemuel is supposed to be a pretty, fond, endearing name, by which his mother used to call him; and so much did he value himself upon the interest he had in his mother's affections, that he was not ashamed to call himself by it: And one would the rather incline to think it is Solomon that here tells us what his mother taught him, because he tells us, chap. iv. 4. what his father taught him. But some think (and the conjecture is not improbable) that Lemuel was a prince of some neighbouring country, whose mother was a daughter of Israel, perhaps, of the house of David, and taught him these good lessons. Note, 1. It is the duty of mothers, as well as fathers, to teach their children what is good, that they may do it, and what is evil, that they may avoid it; when they are young and tender, they are most under the mother's eye, and she has then an opportunity of molding and fashioning their minds well, which she ought not to let slip. 2. Even kings must be catechised; the greatest of men is less than the least of the ordinances of God. 3. Those that are grown up to maturity, should often call to mind, and make mention of the good in-

structions they received when they were children, for their own admonition, the edification of others, and the honour of those who were the guides of their youth.

Now in this mother's (this queen mother's) catechism, observe, (1.) Her expostulation with the young prince; by which she lays hold of him, claims an interest in him, and awakens his attention to what she was about to say, ver. 2. *What, my son? what shall I say to thee?* She speaks as one considering what advice to give him, and choosing out words to reason with him; so full of concern is she for his welfare! Or, *What is this that thou dost?* It seems to be a chiding question: She observed when he was young that he was too much inclined to women and wine; and therefore she found it necessary to take him to task, and deal roundly with him. *What, my son?* Is this the course of life thou intendest to lead? Have I taught thee no better than thus? I must reprove thee, and reprove thee sharply, and thou must take it well, for,

1. Thou art descended from me; thou art *the son of my womb*, and therefore what I say comes from the authority and affection of a parent; and cannot be suspected to come from any ill will; thou art a piece of my self, I bare thee with sorrow, and I expect no other return for all the pains I have taken with thee; and undergone for thee; but this only, Be wise and good; and then I am well paid.

2. Thou art devoted to my God; thou art *the son of my vows*; the son I prayed to God to give me, and promised to give back to God, and did so; thus Samuel was the son of Hannah's vows; thou art the son I have often prayed to God to give his grace to; (Psalm lxxii. 1.) And shall a child of so many prayers miscarry? And shall all my hopes concerning thee be disappointed? Our children that by baptism are dedicated to God, for whom, and in whose name we covenanted with God, may well be called *the children of our vows*; and as this may be made a good plea with God in our prayers for them, so it may be made a good plea with them in the instructions we give them; we may tell them they are baptized; are *the children of our vows*, and it is at their peril if they break those bonds in sunder which in their infancy they were solemnly brought under.

(2.) The caution she gives him against the two destroying sins of uncleanness and drunkenness, which, if he allowed himself in them, would certainly be his ruin.

1. Against uncleanness, ver. 3. *Give not thy strength unto women*, unto strange women; he must not be soft and effeminate, nor spend that time in a vain conversation with the ladies which should be spent in getting knowledge, and dispatching business; nor employ that wit which is the strength of the soul in courting and complimenting them, which he should employ about the affairs of his government: Especially shun all adultery, fornication, and lasciviousness, which wastes the strength of the body, and brings it into dangerous diseases: *Give not thy ways*, thy affections, thy conversation, *to that which destroys kings*, which has destroyed many; which gave such a shock to the kingdom, even of David himself, in the matter of Uriah: Let others harms be thy warnings. It lessens the honour of kings, and makes them mean: Are these fit to govern others, that are themselves slaves to their own lusts? It makes them unfit for business, and fills their court with the basest and worst of animals. Kings lie exposed to temptations of this kind, having wherewith both to please the humours, and to bear the charges of the sin, and therefore they ought to double their guard; and if they would preserve their people from the unclean spirit, must themselves be patterns of purity. And meaner people may apply it to themselves: Let none give their strength to that which destroys souls.

2. Against drunkenness, ver. 4, 5. He must not *drink wine*, or *strong drink* to excess; must never sit to drink as they used to do in the day of their king, when the princes made him sick with *bottles of wine*, Hos. vii. 5. Whatever temptation he might be in by the excellency of the wine, or the charms of the company, he must deny himself, and be strictly sober, considering,

(1.) The indecency of drunkenness in a king: However some may call it a fashionable accomplishment and entertainment, *It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings* to allow themselves that liberty, it is a disparagement to their dignity, and profanes their crown, by muddling the head that wears it; that which for the time unmans them, doth for the time unking them. Shall we say *they are gods*, no; they are *worse than the beasts that perish*. All christians are *made to our God kings and priests*, and must apply this to themselves: *It is not for christians, it is not for christians to drink to excess*, they debase themselves if they do; it ill becomes the heirs of the kingdom, and the spiritual priests, Lev. x. 9.

(2.) The ill consequences of it, ver. 5. *Lest they drink away their understandings and memories, drink and forget the law* by which they are to govern, and so, instead of doing good with their power, do hurt with it, and *pervert, or alter the judgment of all the sons of affliction*, and when they should right them, wrong them, and add to their affliction. It is a sad complaint which is made of the priests and prophets, Isa. xxviii. 7. *that they have erred through wine, and through strong drink they are out of the way*; and the effect is as ill in kings, who, when they are drunk, or intoxicated with the love of wine, cannot but stumble in judgment.

Judges must have clear heads, which those cannot have, who so oft make themselves giddy, and incapacitate themselves to judge of the most common things.

(3.) The counsel she gives him to do good.

1. He must do good with his wealth. Great men must not think that they have their abundance, only that out of it they may *make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts of it*, and may the more freely indulge their own genius; no, but that with it they may relieve such as are in distress, *ver. 6, 7*. Thou hast wine and strong drink at command, instead of doing thy self hurt with it, do others good with it, let them have it that need it; those that have wherewithal, must not only give bread to the hungry, and water to the thirsty, but they must *give strong drink to him that is ready to perish* through sickness or pain, and wine to those that are melancholy, and of heavy heart; for it was appointed to cheer and revive the spirits, and *make glad the heart*, as it doth where there is need of it, not to burthen and oppress the spirits, as it doth where there is no need of it. We must deny our selves in the gratifications of sense, that we may have to spare for the relief of others miseries, and be glad to see our superfluities and dainties better bestowed upon those whom they will be a real kindness to, than upon our selves whom they will be a real injury to. Let those that are *ready to perish* drink soberly, and it will be a means so to revive their drooping spirits, that they will *forget their poverty* for the time, and *remember their misery no more*; and so be the better able to bear it. The Jews say, that upon this was grounded the practice of giving a stupifying drink to condemned prisoners when they were going to execution, as they did to our Saviour. But the scope of the place is to shew that wine is a cordial, and therefore to be used for want, and not for wantonness, by those only that need cordials, as Timothy, who is advised to *drink a little wine*, only *for his stomach sake, and his often infirmities*, 1 Tim. v. 23.

2. He must do good with his power, his knowledge, and interest; must administer justice with care, and courage, and compassion, *ver. 8, 9*. (1.) He must himself take cognizance of the causes his subjects have depending in his courts, and inspect what his judges and officers did, that he might support those that did their duty, and lay those aside that neglected it, or were partial. (2.) He must in all matters that were before him *judge righteously*, and, without fear of the face of man, boldly pass sentence according to equity: *Open thy mouth*; which notes the liberty of speech that princes and judges ought to use in passing sentence. And some observe, that wise men only open their mouths, for fools have their mouths always open, are full of words. (3.) He must especially look upon himself as obliged to be the patron of oppressed innocency; the inferior magistrates, perhaps, had not zeal and tenderness enough to *plead the cause of the poor and needy*, therefore the king himself must interpose, and appear as an advocate; 1. For those that were unjustly charged with capital crimes, as Naboth was; that were *appointed to destruction*, to gratify the malice either of a particular person, or a party: It is a case which it well befits a king to appear in, for the preserving of innocent blood. 2. For those that had actions unjustly brought against them, to defraud them of their right, because they were *poor and needy*, and unable to defend it, not having wherewithal to see council; in such a case also kings must be advocates for the poor. Especially, 3. For those that were *dumb*, and knew not how to speak for themselves, either through weakness or fear, or being over-talked by the prosecutor, or over-awed by the court. It is generous to speak for those that cannot speak for themselves, that are absent, or have not words at command, or are timorous. Our law appoints the judge to be of council for the prisoner.

10. Who can find out a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. 11. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. 12. She will do him good, and not evil, all the days of her life. 13. She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. 14. She is like the merchants ships, she bringeth her food from afar. 15. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. 16. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. 17. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. 18. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. 19. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. 20. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. 21. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. 22. She maketh her self coverings of tapestry, her clothing is silk and purple. 23. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. 24. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it, and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. 25. Strength and honour

are her clothing, and she shall rejoice in time to come. 26. She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness. 27. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. 28. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her: 29. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. 30. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised. 31. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates.

This description of the *virtuous woman* is designed to shew what wives the women should make, and what wives the men should choose; it consists of twenty-two verses, each beginning with a several letter of the Hebrew alphabet in order, as some of the *Psalms*; which makes some think it was no part of the lesson which Lemuel's mother taught him, but a poem by it self, writ by some other hand, and, perhaps, had been commonly repeated among the pious Jews, for the ease of which it was made alphabetical. We have the abridgment of it in the New Testament, 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10. 1 Pet. iii. 1,—6. where the duty prescribed to wives agrees with this description of a good wife; and with good reason is so much stress laid upon it, since it contributes as much as any one thing to the keeping up of religion in families, and the entail of it upon posterity, that the mothers be wise and good; and of what consequence it is to the wealth and outward prosperity of a house, every one is sensible: He that will thrive must ask his wife leave.

Here is, 1. A general enquiry after such a one, *ver. 10*. where observe, 1. The person enquired after; and that is a *virtuous woman*; a woman of strength, so the word is; though the weaker vessel, yet made strong by wisdom and grace, and the fear of God; it is the same word that is used in the character of good judges, *Exod. xviii. 21*. that they are *able men*, men qualified for the business to which they are called, *men of truth, fearing God*. So it follows, a *virtuous woman* is a woman of spirit, i. e. that has the command of her own spirit, and knows how to manage other peoples; one that is pious and industrious, and a help-meet for a man. In opposition to this strength, we read of the weakness of the heart of an *imperious, whorish woman*, *Ezek. xvi. 30*. A *virtuous woman* is a woman of resolution, that, having espoused good principles, is firm and steady to them, and will not be frightened with winds and clouds from any part of her duty. 2. The difficulty of meeting with such a one: *Who can find her?* Which intimates, that good women are very scarce; and many that seem to be so do not prove so; but he that thought he had found a *virtuous woman* was deceived: *Behold, it was Leah*, and not the Rachel he expected. But he that designs to marry ought to seek diligently for such a one, to have this principally in his eye in all his enquiries, and to take heed that he be not biased by beauty, or gaiety, wealth, or parentage, dressing well, or dancing well, for all these may be, and yet the woman not virtuous; and there is many a woman truly virtuous, who yet is not recommended by these advantages. 3. The unspeakable worth of such a one, and the value which he that hath such a wife ought to put upon her, and to shew it by his thankfulness to God, and his kindness and respect to her, whom he must never think he can do too much for; *her price is far above rubies*, and all the rich ornaments with which vain women adorn themselves: And the more rare such good wives are, the more they are to be valued.

2. A particular description of her, and of her excellent qualifications.

(1.) She is very industrious to recommend her self to her husband's esteem and affection. Those that are good really, will be good relatively. A good woman, if she be brought into the married state, will be a good wife, and make it her business to *please her husband*, 1 Cor. vii. 34. Though she is a woman of spirit her self, yet *her desire is to her husband*, to know his mind, that she may accommodate her self to it, and willing she is that *he rule over her*.

1. She carries her self so that he may repose an intire confidence in her; in her chastity, which she never gave him the least occasion to suspect, or to entertain any jealousy of; she is not morose and reserved, but modest and grave, and has all the marks of virtue in her countenance and carriage; her husband knows it, and therefore his *heart doth safely trust in her*; he is easy, and makes her so: He trusts in her conduct, that she will speak in all companies, and act in all affairs with prudence and discretion, so as not to occasion him either damage or reproach: He trusts in her fidelity to his interests, and that she will never betray his counsels, or have any interest separate from that of his family. When he goes abroad, to attend the concerns of the publick, he can confide in her to order all his affairs at home, as well as if he himself were there. She is a good wife that is fit to be trusted, and he a good husband that will leave it to such a wife to manage for him.

2. She contributes so much to his content and satisfaction, *that he shall have no need of spoil*; he needs not be griping and scraping abroad, as those must be whose wives are proud and wasteful at home,

home. She manages his affairs so that he is always before-hand, hath such plenty of his own that he is in no temptation to prey upon his neighbours. He thinks himself so happy in her, that he envies not those who have most of the wealth of this world; he needs it not, he has enough having such a wife. Happy the couple that have such a satisfaction as this in each other!

3. She makes it her constant business to *do him good*, and is afraid of doing any thing, even through inadvertency, that may turn to his prejudice, *ver. 12.* She shews her love to him, not by a foolish fondness, but by prudent endearments, accommodating her self to his temper, and not crossing him, giving him good words, and not ill ones, no, not when he is out of humour; studying to make him easy, to provide what is fit for him both in health and sickness, and attending him with diligence and tenderness when any thing ails him; and would not for the world willingly do any thing that might be a damage to his person, family, estate, or reputation: And this is her care *all the days of her life*; not at first only, or now and then, when she is in a good humour, but perpetually; and she is not weary of the good offices she doth him: *She doth him good, not only all the days of his life, but of her own too*; if she survive him, still she is doing him good in her care of his children, his estate, and good name; and all the concerns he left behind him. We read of kindness shewed, not only to the living, but to the dead, *Ruth ii. 20.*

4. She adds to his reputation in the world, *ver. 23.* *Her husband is known in the gates*, known to have a good wife: By his wife counsels, and prudent management of affairs, it appears that he has a discreet companion in his bosom, by conversation with whom he improves himself. By his cheerful countenance, and pleasant humour, it appears that he has an agreeable wife at home; for many that have not have their tempers strangely soured by it. Nay, by his appearing clean and neat in his dress, every thing about him decent and handsome, and not gaudy, one may know he has a good wife at home that takes care of his clothes.

(2.) She is one that takes pains in the duty of her place, and takes pleasure in it. This part of her character is much enlarged upon here.

1. She hates to sit still and do nothing; *she eats not the bread of idleness*, *ver. 27.* Though she needs not work for her bread, she has an estate to live upon, yet she will not eat it in idleness, because she knows we were none of us sent into this world to be idle, and when we have nothing to do, the devil will soon find us something to do; and those that *will not labour*, it is not fit they should eat. Some eat and drink because they can find themselves nothing else to do; and needless visits must be received with fashionable entertainments; these are eating the bread of idleness, which she has no relish of at all, for she neither gives nor receives idle visits, or idle talk.

2. She is careful to fill up time, that none of that be lost. When day-light is done, she doth not then think it time to lay by her work, as those are forced to do whose business lies abroad in the fields, *Psal. civ. 23.* but her business lying within doors, and her work worth candle-light, with that she lengthens out the day; and *her candle goes not out by night*, *ver. 18.* It is a mercy to have candle-light to supply the want of day-light, and a duty, having that advantage, to improve it. We say of an elaborate piece, that it smells of the lamp.

3. *She riseth early, while it is yet night*, *ver. 15.* to give her servants their breakfast, that they may be ready to go cheerfully about their work as soon as the day breaks. She is none of those who sit up playing at cards; or dancing, till midnight, till morning, and then lie in bed till noon; no, the *virtuous woman* loves her business better than her ease, or her pleasure; is in care to be found in the way of her duty every hour of the day, and has more true satisfaction in having *given meat to her household* betimes in the morning, than those can have in the money they have won, much more in what they have lost, who sat up all night at play. Those that have a family to take care of should not love their bed too well in a morning.

4. She applies her self to the business that is proper for her. It is not in scholar's business, or statesman's business, or husbandman's business that she employs her self, but in women's business; *she seeks wool and flax*, where she may have the best of each, at the best hand, and best cheap; has a stock of both by her, and every thing that is necessary to the carrying on both of the woollen and linen manufacture, *ver. 13.* and with this, she doth not only set the poor on work, which is a very good office, but doth her self work, *and work willingly with her hands*; she works with the counsel or delight of her hands, so the word is; she goes about it cheerfully and dextrously; not only lays her hand, but her mind to it, and goes on in it without weariness in well doing. *She lays her own hands to the spindle*, or spinning-wheel, *and her hands hold the distaff*, *ver. 19.* and she doth not reckon it either an abridgment of her liberty, or a disparagement to her dignity; or at all inconsistent with her repose. The spindle and the distaff are here mentioned as her honour, while the ornaments of the daughters of Zion are reckoned up to their reproach, *Isa. iii. 18.*

5. She doth what she doth with all her might, and doth not trifle in it, *ver. 17.* *She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengthens her arms*; she doth not employ her self in sitting work

only, or in that which is only the nice performance of the fingers; there are works that are scarce one remove from doing nothing; but if there be occasion, she will go through with work that requires all the strength she has, which she will use as one that knows it is the way to have more.

(3.) She is one that makes what she doth to turn to a good account, by her prudent management of it; she doth not toil all night and catch nothing; no, she herself perceives that her merchandise is good, *ver. 18.* she is sensible that in all her labour there is profit, and that encourageth her to go on in it. She perceives that she can make things her self better and cheaper than she can buy them; she finds by observation what branch of her employment brings in the best returns, and that she applies her self most closely to.

1. She brings in provisions of all things necessary and convenient for her family, *ver. 14.* No merchants ships, no, not Solomon's navy, ever made a more advantageous return than her employments do: Do they bring in foreign commodities with the effects they export? so doth she with the fruit of her labours: What her own ground doth not produce, she can furnish her self with it, if she have occasion for it, by exchanging her own goods for it; and so *she brings her food from afar*: Not that she values things the more for their being far fetched, but, if they be never so far off, if she must have them, she knows how to come by them.

2. She purchaseth lands, and enlargeth the demesne of the family, *ver. 16.* *She considereth a field and buyeth it*: She considers what an advantage it will be to the family, and what a good account it will turn to, and therefore she buys it; or rather, though she have never so much mind of it, she will not buy it, till she has first considered it, whether it be worth her money, whether she can afford to take so much money out of her stock as must go to purchase it; whether the title be good, whether the ground will answer the character given of it, and whether she have money at command to pay for it. Many have undone themselves by buying without considering, but those who would make advantageous purchases, must consider, and then buy. *She also plants a vineyard*, but it is *with the fruit of her hands*; she doth not take up money, or run into debt to do it, but she doth it with what she can spare out of the gains of her own housewifery. Men should not lay out any thing upon superfluities, till, by the blessing of God upon their industry, they are got before-hand, and can afford it; and then the fruit of the vineyard is likely to be doubly sweet when it is the fruit of honest industry.

3. She furnisheth her house well, and has good clothing for her self and her family, *ver. 22.* *She maketh her self coverings of tapestry* to hang her rooms, and she may be allowed to use them when they are of her own making; her own clothing is rich and fine, it is *silk and purple*, according to her place and rank. Though she is not so vain as to spend much time in dressing her, nor makes the putting on of apparel her adorning, nor values her self by it, yet she has rich clothes, and puts them on well. The senators robes her husband wears are of her own spinning, and they look better, and wear better than any that is bought. She also gets good warm clothing for her children, and her servants liveries; she needs not fear the cold of the most pinching winter, for she and her family are well provided with clothes, sufficient to keep out cold, which is the end chiefly to be aimed at in clothing: *All her household are clothed in scarlet*, strong cloth, and fit for winter, and yet rich, and making a good appearance. They are *all double clothed*, so some read it; have change of raiment, a winter suit, and a summer suit.

4. She trades abroad, she makes more than she and her household have occasion for, and therefore, when she has sufficiently stocked her family, *she sells fine linen and girdles to the merchants*, *ver. 24.* who carry them to Tyre, the mart of the nations, or some other trading city. Those families are likely to thrive that sell more than they buy, as it is well with the kingdom when abundance of its home manufactures are exported. It is no disgrace to those of the best quality to sell what they can spare; nor to deal in trade, and send ventures by sea.

5. She lays up for hereafter; *she shall rejoice in time to come*, having laid in a good stock for her family, and having good portions for her children: Those that take pains when they are in their prime, will have the pleasure and joy of it when they are old, both in reflecting upon it, and reaping the benefit of it.

(4.) She takes care of her family, and all the affairs of it, *gives meat to her household*, *ver. 15.* to every one *their portion of meat in due season*, so that none of her servants have reason to complain of being kept short, or faring hard. She gives also a portion, i. e. an allotment of work as well as meat, to her maidens; they shall each of them know their business, and have their task. *She looks well to the ways of her household*, *ver. 27.* i. e. she inspects the manners of all her servants, that she may check what is amiss among them, and oblige them all to carry themselves decently, and do their duty to God and one another, as well as to her; as Job, who put away iniquity far from his tabernacle; and David, who would suffer no wicked thing in his house. She doth not intermeddle in the concerns of other peoples houses, she thinks it enough for her to look well to her own.

(5.) She is charitable *to the poor*, ver. 20. She is as intent upon giving, as she is upon getting, often serves the poor with her own hand, and she doth it freely, and cheerfully, and very liberally, with an out-stretched hand. Nor doth she relieve her poor neighbours only, and those that are nigh at hand, but *she reacheth forth her hands to the needy*, that are at a distance; seeking opportunities *to do good, and to communicate*; which is as good housewifery as any thing she doth.

(6.) She is discreet and obliging in all her discourse; not talkative, censorious, or peevish, as some are that know how to take pains; no, *she opens her mouth with wisdom*, when she doth speak it is with a great deal of prudence, and very much to the purpose; you may perceive by every word she saith, how much she governs her self by the rules of wisdom: She not only takes prudent measures her self, but gives prudent advice to others; and this, not as assuming the authority of a dictator, but with the affection of a friend, and an obliging air; *in her tongue is the law of kindness*, i. e. all she saith is under the government of that law; the law of love and kindness is written in the heart, but it shews it self in the tongue: If we are *kindly affectioned one to another*, it will appear by affectionate expressions. It is called a *law of kindness*, because it gives law to others, to all she converseth with; her wisdom and kindness together put a commanding power into all she saith, they command respect, they command compliance: How forcible are right words! *In her tongue is the law of grace, or mercy*, so some read it; and understand it of the word and law of God, which she delights to talk of among her children and servants: She is full of pious, religious discourse, and manageth it prudently; which shews how full her heart is of another world, even when her hands are most busy about this world.

(7.) That which compleats and crowns her character, is, that *she fears the Lord*, ver. 30. With all those good qualities she lacks not that *one thing needful*; she is truly pious, and in all she doth is guided and governed by principles of conscience, and regard to God; this is that which is here preferred far before *beauty*, that is *vain and deceitful*; all that are wise and good account it so, and neither value themselves nor others by it. Beauty recommends none to God, nor is it any certain indication of wisdom and goodness, but has deceived many a man who has made his choice of a wife by it. There may be an impure, deformed soul lodged in a comely and beautiful body; nay, many have been exposed by their beauty to such temptations as have been the ruin of their virtue, their honour, and their precious souls. It is a fading thing at the best, and therefore *vain and deceitful*; a fit of sickness will stain and sully it in a little time; a thousand accidents may blast this flower in its prime: However, old age will certainly wither it, and death, and the grave consume it; but the fear of God, reigning in the heart, is the beauty of the soul; it recommends those that have it to the favour of God, is in his sight of great price; it will last for ever, and bid defiance to death it self, which consumes the beauty of the body, but consummates the beauty of the soul.

3. The happiness of this virtuous woman.

(1.) She has the comfort and satisfaction of her virtue in her own mind, ver. 25. *Strength and honour are her clothing*, in which she wraps her self; that is, enjoys her self; and in which she appears to the world, and so recommends her self. She enjoys a firmness and constancy of mind, has spirit to bear up under the many crosses and disappointments which even the wise and virtuous must expect to meet with in this world, and this is her clothing, for defence, as well as decency. She deals honourably with all, and she has the pleasure of doing so, *and shall rejoice in time to come*; she shall reflect upon it with comfort when she comes to be old, that she was not idle or useless when she was young: In the day of death it will be a pleasure to her to think that she has li-

ved to some good purpose: Nay, *she shall rejoice in an eternity to come*, shall be recompensed for her goodness with *fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore*.

(2.) She is a great blessing to her relations, ver. 28.

1. *Her children* grow up in her place, *and they call her blessed*; they give her their good word, they are themselves a commendation to her, and they are ready to give great commendations of her; they pray for her, and bless God that they had such a good mother. It is a debt which they owe her, a part of that honour which the fifth commandment requires to be paid to father and mother; and it is a double honour that is due to a good father, and a good mother.

2. *Her husband* thinks himself so happy in her, that he takes all occasions to speak well of her, as one of the best of women: It is no indecency at all, but a laudable instance of conjugal love, for husbands and wives to give one another their due praises.

(3.) She gets the good word of all her neighbours, as Ruth did, whom *all the city of her people knew to be a virtuous woman*, Ruth iii. 11. Virtue will have its praise, *Phil. iv. 8*. A woman that fears the Lord shall have praise of God, Rom. ii. 29. and of men too. It is here shewed,

1. That she shall be highly praised, ver. 29. *Many have done virtuously*; virtuous women, it seems, are precious jewels, but not such rare jewels as was represented, ver. 10. there have been many, but such a one as this cannot be paralleled; *Who can find her equal? she excelleth them all*. Note, Those that are good should aim and covet to excel in virtue. *Many daughters*, in their father's house, and in the single state, *have done virtuously*, but a good wife, if she be virtuous, *excels them all*, and doth more good in her place than they can do in theirs. Or, as some explain it, A man cannot have his house so well kept by good daughters, as by a good wife.

2. That she shall be uncontestably praised, without contradiction, ver. 31. Some are praised above what is their due, but those that praise her do but *give her of the fruit of her hands*, i. e. they give her that which she has dearly earned, and which is justly owing to her; she is wronged if she have it not.

Note, Those ought to be praised, the fruit of whose hands is praise-worthy. The tree is known by its fruits, and therefore if the fruit be good, the tree must have our good word. If her children be dutiful and respectful to her, and carry themselves as they ought, they then *give her of the fruit of her hands*; she reaps the benefit of all the care she has taken of them, and thinks her self well paid. Children must thus study to *requite their parents*, and this is *showing piety at home*, 1 Tim. v. 4. But if men be unjust, the thing will speak it self, *her own works will praise her in the gates*, openly before all the people. 1. She leaves it to her own works to praise her, and doth not court the applause of men. Those are none of the truly virtuous women that love to hear themselves commended. 2. *Her own works will praise her*; if her relations and neighbours altogether hold their peace, her good works will proclaim her praise. The widows gave the best encomium of Dorcas, when they *shewed the coats and garments she had made for the poor*, Acts ix. 39. 3. The least that can be expected from her neighbours is, that they should *let her own works praise her*, and do nothing to hinder them. They that *do that which is good*, let them *have praise of the same*, Rom. xiii. 3. and let not us enviously say, or do any thing to the diminishing of it, but be provoked by it to a holy emulation: Let none have an ill report from us that have a *good report*, even *of the truth it self*. Thus is shut up this looking-glass for ladies, which they are desired to open, and dress themselves by it; and if they do so, their adorning will be found to praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

The end of the book of PROVERBS.

Twenty Chapters of the Book of Proverbs (beginning with chap. x. and ending with chap. xxix.) consisting mostly of entire sentences in each verse, could not well be reduced to proper heads and the contents of them gathered; I have therefore here put the contents of all these chapters together, which, perhaps, may be of some use to those who desire to see at once all that is said of any one head in these chapters. I take the heads in no method, but as they occurred in reading the chapters; some of the verses I have not put under the same heads that another would have put them under, but the most of them fall (I hope) naturally enough to the places I have assigned them.

- (1.) **O**F the comfort, or grief, parents have in their children, according as they are wise, or foolish, godly, or ungodly, *chap. x. 1. | xv. 20. | xvii. 21, 25. xix. 13, 26. | xxiii. 15, 16, 24, 25. | xxvii. 11. xxix. 3.*
- (2.) Of the world's insufficiency, and religion's sufficiency to make us happy, *chap. x. 2, 3. | xi. 4. and the preference to be therefore given to the gains of virtue above those of this world, ch. xv. 16, 17. | xvi. 8. 16. | xvii. 1. xix. 1. | xxviii. 6. 11.*
- (3.) Of slothfulness and diligence, *ch. x. 4. 26. | xii. 11. 24. 27. | xiii. 4. 23. | xv. 19. | xvi. 26. | xviii. 9. | xix. 15. 24. | xx. 4. 13. | xxi. 5, 25, 26. | xxii. 13. 29. | xxiv. 30, 31, 32, 33, 34. | xxvi. 13, 14, 15. 16. | xxvii. 18, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27. | xxviii. 19. Particularly the improving or neglecting opportunities, ch. x. 5. | xvii. 6.*
- (4.) The happiness of the righteous and the misery of the wicked, *ch. x. 6, 9, 16, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30. | xi. 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 18, 19, 20, 21, 31. | xii. 2, 3, 7, 13, 14, 21, 26, 28. | xiii. 6, 9, 14, 15, 21, 22, 25. | xiv. 11, 14, 19, 32. | xv. 6, 8, 9, 24, 26, 29. | xx. 7. | xxi. 12, 15, 16, 18, 21. | xxii. 12. | xxviii. 10, 18. xxix. 6.*
- (5.) Of honour and dishonour, *ch. x. 7. | xii. 8, 9. | xviii. 3. xxvi. 1. | xxvii. 21. And of vainglory, ch. xxv. 14, 27. xxvii. 2.*
- (6.) The wisdom of obedience and folly of disobedience, *ch. x. 8, 17. | xii. 1, 15. | xiii. 1, 13, 18. | xv. 5, 10, 12, 31, 32. | xix. 15. | xxviii. 4, 7, 9.*
- (7.) Of mischievousness and usefulness, *ch. x. 10, 23. xi. 9, 10, 11, 23, 27. | xii. 5, 6, 12, 18, 20. | xiii. 2. xiv. 22. | xvi. 29, 30. | xvii. 11. | xxi. 10. | xxiv. 8. xxvi. 23, 27.*
- (8.) The praise of wise and good discourse, and the hurt and shame of an ungoverned tongue, *ch. x. 11, 13, 14, 20, 21, 31, 32. | xi. 30. | xiv. 3. | xv. 2, 4, 7, 23, 28. | xvi. 20, 23, 24. | xvii. 7. | xviii. 4, 7, 20, 21. | xx. 15. | xxi. 23. xxiii. 9. | xxiv. 26. | xxv. 11.*
- (9.) Of love and hatred, peaceableness and contention, *ch. x. 12. | xv. 17. | xvii. 1, 9, 14, 19. | xviii. 6, 17, 18, 19. | xx. 3. | xxv. 8. | xxvi. 17, 21. | xxix. 9.*
- (10.) Of the rich and poor, *ch. x. 15, 22. | xi. 28. | xiii. 7, 8. | xiv. 20, 24. | xviii. 11, 23. | xix. 1, 4, 7, 22. xxii. 2, 7. | xxviii. 6, 11. | xxix. 13.*
- (11.) Of lying, fraud, and dissimulation, and of truth and sincerity, *ch. x. 18. | xii. 17, 19, 22. | xiii. 5. | xvii. 4. | xx. 14, 17. | xxi. 8. | xxvi. 18, 19, 24, 25, 26, 28.*
- (12.) Of slander, *ch. x. 18. | xvi. 27. | xxv. 23.*
- (13.) Of talkativeness and silence, *ch. x. 19. | xi. 12. | xii. 23. | xiii. 3. | xvii. 27, 28. | xxix. 11, 20.*
- (14.) Of justice and injustice, *ch. xi. 1. | xiii. 11. | xvi. 8, 11. | xvii. 15, 26. | xviii. 5. | xx. 10, 23. | xxii. 28. | xxiii. 10, 11. | xxix. 24.*
- (15.) Of pride and humility, *ch. xi. 2. | xiii. 10. | xv. 25, 33. | xvi. 5, 18, 19. | xviii. 12. | xxi. 4. | xxv. 7, 8. xxviii. 25. | xxix. 23.*
- (16.) Of despising and respecting others, *chap. xi. 12. xiv. 21.*
- (17.) Of tale-bearing, *ch. xi. 13. | xvi. 28. | xviii. 8. | xx. 19. | xxvi. 20, 22.*
- (18.) Of rashness and deliberation, *ch. xi. 14. | xv. 22. xviii. 13. | xix. 2. | xx. 5, 18. | xxi. 29. | xxii. 3. | xxv. 8, 9, 10.*
- (19.) Of Suretiship, *ch. xi. 15. | xvii. 18. | xx. 16. | xxii. 26, 27. | xxvii. 13.*
- (20.) Of good and bad women, or wives, *ch. xi. 16, 22. xii. 9. | xiv. 1. | xviii. 22. | xix. 13, 14. | xxi. 9, 19. | xxv. 24. | xxvii. 15, 16.*
- (21.) Of mercifulness and unmercifulness, *ch. xi. 17. | xii. 10. | xiv. 21. | xix. 17. | xxi. 13.*
- (22.) Of charity to the poor, and uncharitableness, *ch. xi. 24, 25, 26. | xiv. 31. | xvii. 5. | xxii. 9, 16, 22, 23. | xxviii. 27. | xxix. 7.*
- (23.) Of covetousness and contentment, *ch. xi. 29. | xv. 16, 17, 27. | xxiii. 4, 5.*
- (24.) Of anger and meekness, *ch. xii. 16. | xiv. 17, 29. xv. 1, 18. | xvi. 32. xvii. 12, 26. | xix. 11, 19. | xxii. 24. 25. | xxv. 15, 28. | xxvi. 3. | xxix. 22.*
- (25.) Of melancholy and cheerfulness, *chap. xii. 25. xiv. 10, 13. | xv. 13, 15. | xvii. 22. | xviii. 14. xxv. 20, 25.*
- (26.) Of hope and expectation, *ch. xiii. 12, 19.*
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AN EXPOSITION

Of the Book of

ECCLIESIASTES,

With Practical Observations.

We are still among Solomon's happy men; his happy servants, that stood continually before him to hear his wisdom; and they are the choicest of all the dictates of his wisdom, such as were more immediately given by divine inspiration, that are here transmitted to us, not to be heard as by them but once; and then liable to be mistaken or forgotten, and by repetition to lose their beauty; but to be read, reviewed, revolved, and had in everlasting remembrance. The account we have of Solomon's apostasy from God in the latter end of his reign, 1 Kings xi. 1. is the tragical part of his story; we may suppose he spake his Proverbs in the prime of his time, while he kept his integrity, but delivered his Ecclesiastes when he was grown old (for of the burthens and decays of age he speaks feelingly chap. xii.) and was, by the grace of God, recovered from his backslidings: there he dictated his observations, here he wrote his own experiences; this is what days speak, and wisdom which the multitude of years teacheth. The title of the book and the penman we shall meet with in the first verse, and therefore shall here only observe,

- 1. That it is a Sermon; a Sermon in print, the text is, ch. i. 2. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity; that is the doctrine too; it is proved at large by many arguments, and an induction of particulars; and divers objections are answered, and in the close we have the use and application of all, by way of exhortation, to remember our Creator, to fear him, and to keep his commandments. There are indeed many things in this book which are dark and hard to be understood; and some things which men of corrupt minds wrest to their own destruction, for want of distinguishing between Solomon's arguments, and the objections of atheists and epicures; but there is enough easy and plain to convince us (if we will admit the conviction) of the vanity of the world, and its utter insufficiency to make us happy; the vileness of sin; and its certain tendency to make us miserable; and of the wisdom of being religious, and the solid comfort and satisfaction that is to be had in doing our duty both to God and man; this should be intended in every sermon, and that is a good sermon by which these points are in any measure gained.*
- 2. That it is a penitential sermon, as some of David's psalms are penitential psalms; it is a recantation sermon, in which the preacher sadly laments his own folly and mistake, in promising himself satisfaction in the things of this world, and even in the forbidden pleasures of sense, which now he finds more bitter than death. His fall is a proof of the weakness of man's nature; Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor say, I shall never be such a fool as to do so and so, when Solomon himself, the wisest of men, plaid the fool so egregiously; nor let the rich man glory in his riches, since Solomon's wealth was so great a snare to him, and did him a great deal more hurt than Job's poverty did him. His recovery is a proof of the power of God's grace, in bringing one back to God that had gone so far from him, and the riches of God's mercy in accepting him, notwithstanding the many aggravations of his sin, pursuant to the promise made to David, that if his children should commit iniquity, they should be corrected, but not abandoned and disinherited, 2 Sam. vii. 14, 15. Let him therefore that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall, and let him that is fallen, make haste to get up again, and not despair either of assistance or of acceptance therein.*
- 3. That it is a practical, profitable sermon: Solomon being brought to repentance, resolves, like his father, to teach transgressors God's way, Psal. li. 13. and to give warning to all to take heed of splitting upon those rocks which had been fatal to him; and these were fruits meet for repentance. The fundamental error of the children of men, and that which is at the bottom of all their departures from God is the same with that of our first parents hoping to be as gods, by entertaining themselves with that which seems good for food, pleasant to the eye, and desirable to make one wise. Now the scope of this book is to shew, that this is a great mistake; that our happiness consists not in being as gods to our selves, to have what we will, and do what we will, but in having him that made us to be a God to us. The moral philosophers disputed much about man's felicity or chief good, various opinions they had about it, but Solomon in this book determines the question, and assures us, that to fear God and keep his commandments is the whole of man. He tried what satisfaction might be found in the wealth of the world, and the pleasures of sense, and at last pronounced all vanity and vexation; yet multitudes will not take his word, but will make the same dangerous experiment, and it proves fatal to them. He, 1. shews the vanity of those things in which men commonly look for a happiness, as human learning and policy, sensual delights, honour and power; riches and great possessions. And then, 2. He prescribes remedies against the vexation of spirit that attends them. Though we cannot cure them of their vanity, we may prevent the trouble they give us, by sitting loose to them, enjoying them comfortably, but laying our expectations low from them, and acquiescing in the will of God concerning us in every event, especially by remembering God in the days of our youth; and continuing in his fear and service all our days, with an eye to the judgment to come.*

CHAP. I.

In this chapter we have, 1. The inscription or title of the book, ver. 1. 2. The general doctrine of the vanity of the creature laid down, ver. 2. and explained, ver. 3. 3. The proof of this doctrine, taken, (1.) From the shortness of human life, and the multitude of births and burials in this life, ver. 4. (2.) From the inconstant nature, and constant revolutions of all the creatures, and the perpetual flux and reflux they are in; the sun, wind, and water, ver. 5, 6, 7. (3.) From the abundant toil man has about them, and the little satisfaction he has in them, ver. 8. (4.) From the return of the same things again, which shews the end of all perfection, and that the stock is exhausted, ver. 9, 10. (5.) From the oblivion to which all things are condemned, ver. 11. 4. The first instance of the vanity of men's knowledge, and all the parts of learning, especially natural philosophy and politicks. Observe, (1.) The trial Solomon made of these, ver. 12, 13, 16, 17. (2.) His judgment of them; that all is vanity, ver. 14. For, 1. There is labour in getting knowledge, ver. 13. 2. There is little good to be done with it, ver. 15. 3. There is no satisfaction in it, ver. 18. And if this is vanity and vexation, all other things in this world being much inferior to it in dignity and worth, must needs be so too. A great scholar cannot be happy unless he be a true saint.

THE words of the preacher, the son of David, king of Jerusalem. 2. Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity. 3. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?

Here is, 1. An account of the penman of this book; it was Solomon, for no other son of David, but he, was king of Jerusalem; but he conceals his name: Solomon peaceable, because by his sin he had brought trouble upon himself and his kingdom, had broken his peace with God, and lost the peace of his conscience, and therefore was no more worthy of that name, call me not Solomon, call me Marah, for, *behold for peace I had great bitterness.* But he calls himself,

1. The preacher; which speaks his present character: He is *Kobelet*, which comes from a word that signifies to gather; but it is of a feminine termination, by which, perhaps, Solomon intends to upbraid himself with his effeminacy, which contributed more than any thing to his apostasy; for it was to please his wives that he set up idols, *Neh. xiii. 26.* Or the word *Soul* must be understood, and so *Kobelet* is,

(1.) A penitent soul, or one gathered; that had rambled and gone astray like a lost sheep, but was now reduced, gathered in from his wanderings, gathered home to his duty, and come at length to himself; the spirit that was dissipated, after a thousand vanities, is now collected and made to center in God. Divine grace can make great sinners great converts, and renew even those to repentance that after they had known the way of righteousness turned aside from it, and heal their backslidings, though it is a difficult case. It is only the penitent soul that God will accept, the heart that is broken, not the head that is bowed down like a bulrush only for a day, David's repentance, not Ahab's. And it is only the gathered soul that is the penitent soul, that comes back from its by-paths, that no longer scatters its ways to the strangers, *Jer. iii. 13.* but is united to fear God's name. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak, and therefore we have here the words of the penitent, and those published. If eminent professors of religion fall into gross sin, they are concerned for the honour of God, and the repairing the damage they have done to his kingdom, openly to testify their repentance, that the plaister may be as wide as the wound.

(2.) A preaching soul, or one gathering. Being himself gathered to the congregation of saints, out of which he had by his sin thrown himself, and reconciled to the church, he endeavours to gather others to it that had gone astray like him, and, perhaps, were led astray by his example. He that has done any thing to seduce his brother, ought to do all he can to reduce him. Perhaps Solomon called together a congregation of his people, as he had done at the dedication of the temple, *1 Kings viii. 2.* so now at the rededicating of himself: in that assembly he presided as the peoples mouth to God in prayer, ver. 12. in this as God's mouth to them in preaching. God, by his Spirit, made him a preacher, in token of his being reconciled to him; a commission is an implicit pardon; Christ sufficiently signified his forgiving Peter by committing his lambs and sheep to his trust. Observe, Penitents should be preachers, they that have taken warning themselves to turn and live, should give warning to others not to go on and die. *When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren.* Preachers must be preaching souls, for that only is likely to reach to the heart that comes from the heart. Paul served God with his spirit in the gospel of his Son, *Rom. i. 9.*

2. The son of David. His taking this title intimates, (1.) That he looked upon it as a great honour to be the son of so good a

man, and valued himself very much upon it. (2.) That he also looked upon it as a great aggravation of his sin, that he had such a father who had given him a good education, and put up many a good prayer for him; it cuts him to the heart to think that he should be a blemish and disgrace to the name and family of such a one as David. It aggravated the sin of Jehoiakim that he was the son of Josiah, *Jer. xxii. 15, 16, 17.* (3.) That his being the son of David encouraged him to repent and hope for mercy, for David had fallen into sin, by which he should have been warned not to sin, but was not; but David repented, and therein he took example from him, and found mercy as he did. Yet this was not all, he was that son of David concerning whom God had said, that though he would chasten his transgression with the rod, yet he would not break his covenant with him, *Psal. lxxxix. 34.* Christ the great preacher was the Son of David.

3. King of Jerusalem. This he mentions, (1.) As that which was a very great aggravation of his sin; that he was a king; God had done much for him in raising him to the throne, and yet he had so ill requited him; his dignity made the ill example and influence of his sin the more dangerous, and many would follow his pernicious ways. That he was king of Jerusalem, the holy city, where God's temple was, and of his own building too, where the priests, the Lord's ministers were, and his prophets who had taught him better things. (2.) As that which might give some advantage to what he wrote, for where the word of a king is there is power. He thought it no disparagement to him, as a king, to be a preacher, but the people would regard him the more as a preacher, because he was a king. If men of honour would lay out themselves to do good, what a great deal of good might they do! Solomon looked as great in the pulpit, preaching the vanity of the world, as in his throne of ivory judging.

The Chaldee paraphrase (which in this book makes very large additions to the text, or comments upon it all along) gives this account of Solomon's writing this book; That, by the spirit of prophecy, he foresaw the revolt of the ten tribes from his son; and in process of time the destruction of Jerusalem, and the house of the sanctuary, and the captivity of the people; and in the foresight of that he said, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity;* and to that he applies many passages in this book.

2. The general scope and design of the book. What is it this royal preacher has to say? That which he aims at is for the making of us truly religious, to take down our esteem of and expectation from the things of this world. In order to this he shews,

1. That they are all vanity, ver. 2. This is the proposition he lays down, and undertakes to prove, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.* It was no new text, his father David had more than once spoken to the same purpose. The truth itself here asserted is, that all is vanity; all besides God, and considered as abstract from him: The all of this world; all worldly employments and enjoyments; the all that is in the world, *1 John ii. 16.* All that which is agreeable to our senses, and to our fancies in this present state, which gains pleasure to ourselves, or reputation with others. It is all vanity, not only in the abuse of it, when it is perverted by the sin of man, but even in the use of it; man considered with reference to these things is vanity, *Psal. xxxix. 5, 6.* and if there were not another life after this were made in vain, *Psal. lxxxix. 47.* and those things considered in reference to man (whatever they are in themselves) are vanity. They are impertinent to the soul, foreign, and add nothing to it, they do not answer the end, nor yield any true satisfaction; they are uncertain in their continuance, are fading and perishing, and passing away, and will certainly deceive and disappoint those that put a confidence in them. Let us not therefore love vanity, *Psal. iv. 2.* nor lift up our souls to it, *Psal. xxiv. 4.* for we shall but weary ourselves for it, *Hab. ii. 13.*

It is expressed here very emphatically; not only all is vain, but in the abstract, all is vanity, as if vanity were the *proprium quod modis* of the things of this world, which enters into the nature of them. They are not only vanity, but vanity of vanities, the vainest vanity, vanity in the highest degree; nothing but vanity; such a vanity as is the cause of a great deal of vanity. And this is redoubled, because the thing is certain and past dispute, it is vanity of vanities. This intimates, that the wise man had his own heart fully convinced of, and much affected with this truth, and that he was very desirous that others should be convinced of it, and affected with it as he was, but that he found the generality of men very loth to believe it, *Job xxxiii. 14.* it intimates likewise that we cannot comprehend and express the vanity of this world. But who is it that speaks thus slightly of the world, is it one that will stand to what he saith? Yes, he puts his name to it, saith the preacher. Is it one that was a competent judge? Yes, as much as ever any man was: many speak contemptibly of the world, because they are hermits and know it not, or beggars and have it not; but Solomon knew it, he had dived into nature's depths, *1 Kings iv. 33.* and he had it, more of it, perhaps, than ever any man had, his head filled with its notions, and his belly with its hid treasures, *Psal. xvii. 14.* and he passeth this judgment on it. But did he speak as one having authority? Yes, not only that of a king, but that of a prophet, a preacher; he

he spake in God's name, and was divinely inspired to say it. But did he not say it in his haste, or in a passion, upon occasion of some particular disappointment? No, he said it deliberately, said it and proved it; laid it down as a fundamental principle on which he grounded the necessity of being religious. And, as some think, one main thing he designed was to shew, that the everlasting throne and kingdom which God had, by Nathan, promised to David and his seed, must be of another world, for all things in this world are subject to vanity, and therefore have not in them sufficient to answer the extent of that promise. If Solomon find all to be vanity, then the kingdom of the Messiah must come, in which we shall inherit substance.

2. That they are insufficient to make us happy. And for this he appeals to mens consciences: *What profit has a man of all the pains he takes*, ver. 3. Observe here,

1. The business of this world described: It is *labour*, the word signifies both care and toil; it is work that wearies men; there is a constant fatigue in worldly business: it is *labour under the sun*, that is a phrase peculiar to this book, where we meet with it twenty eight times. There is a world above the sun, a world which needs not the sun, for the glory of God is its light, where there is work without labour, and with great profit, the work of angels; but he speaks of the work *under the sun*, the pains of which are great and the gains little. It is *under the sun*, under the influence of the sun, by its light and in its heat; as we have the benefit of the light of the day, so we have sometimes the burthen and heat of the day, *Mat. xx. 12.* and therefore *in the sweat of our face we eat bread*; in the dark and cold grave the weary are at rest.

2. The benefit of that business enquired into; *What profit has a man of all that labour?* Solomon saith, *Prov. xiv. 23. In all labour there is profit*; and yet here he denies there is any profit: as to our present condition in the world, it is true that by labour we get that which we call profit; *we eat the labour of our hands*; but as the wealth of the world is commonly called *substance*, and yet it is *that which is not*, *Prov. xxiii. 5.* so it is called *profit*, but the question is, Whether it be so really or no? And here he determines that it is not; that it is not a real benefit, that it is not a remaining benefit. In short, the wealth and pleasure of this world, if we had never so much of it, is not sufficient to make us happy, nor will it be a portion for us. (1.) As to the body, and the life that now is, *What profit has a man of all his labour?* *A man's life consisteth not in an abundance*, *Luke xii. 15.* As goods are increased, care about them is increased, and *they are increased that eat of them*, and a little thing will imberter all the comfort of them, and then *what profit has a man of all his labour?* *Early up, and never the nearer.* (2.) As to the soul, and the life that is to come, we may much more truly say, *What profit has a man of all his labour?* all he gets by it will not supply the wants of the soul, nor satisfy its desires, will not atone for the sin of the soul, nor cure its diseases, nor countervail the loss of it; what profit will they be of to the soul in death, in judgment, or in the everlasting state? The fruit of our labour in heavenly things is *meat that endures to eternal life*, but the fruit of our labour for the world is only *meat that perisheth*.

4. One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever. 5. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. 6. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. 7. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full: unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. 8. All things are full of labour, man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

To prove the vanity of all things under the sun, and their insufficiency to make us happy, Solomon here shews,

1. That the time of our enjoyment of these things is very short, and only while *we accomplish as a hireling his day*: we continue in the world but for one generation; which is continually passing away to make room for another, and we are passing with it. Our worldly possessions we very lately had from others, and must very shortly leave to others, and therefore to us they are vanity; they can be no more substantial than that life which is the *substratum* of them; and that is but a *vapour*, which appears for a little while, and then vanisheth away. While the stream of mankind is continually flowing, what little enjoyment has one drop of that stream of the pleasant banks between which it glides. We may give God the glory of that constant succession of generations in which the world has hitherto had its existence, and will have to the end of time; admiring his patience in continuing that sinful species, and his power in continuing that dying species; we may be also quickened to do the work of our generation diligently, and serve it faithfully, because it will be over shortly; and in concern for mankind in general, we should consult the welfare of succeeding

generations: but as to our own happiness, let us not expect it within such narrow limits; but in an eternal rest and consistency.

2. That when we leave this world we leave the earth behind us, that *abideth for ever* where it is, and therefore the things of the earth can stand us in no stead in the future state: it is well for mankind in general, that the earth endures till the end of time; when it and all the works in it shall be burnt up; but what is that to particular persons when they remove to the world of spirits?

3. That the condition of man is, in this respect, worse than that even of the inferior creatures: *The earth abides for ever*; but man abides upon the earth but a little while. The sun sets indeed every night, yet it riseth again in the morning as bright and fresh as ever; the winds, though they shift their point, yet in some point or other still they are; the waters that go to the sea above ground, come from it again under ground; *but man lies down and rises not*, *Job xiv. 7. 12.*

4. That all things in this world are moveable and mutable; and subject to a continual toil and toils, constant in nothing but inconsistency, still going, never resting; it was but once that the sun stood still, otherwise when it is risen it is hastning to set, and when it is set, hastning to rise again, *ver. 5.* the winds ever and anon shifting, *ver. 6.* and the waters in a continual circulation, *ver. 7.* it would be of as ill consequence for them to stagnate; as for the blood in the body to do so; and can we expect rest in a world where all things are thus full of labour, *ver. 8.* on a sea that is always ebbing and flowing, and her waves continually working and rolling.

5. That though all things are still in motion, yet they are still where they were, the sun *parts*, as it is in the margin, but it is to the same place, the wind turns till it comes to the same place, and so the waters return to the same place whence they came. Thus man, after all the pains he takes to find satisfaction and happiness in the creature, is but where he was, still as far to seek as ever. Man's mind is as restless in its pursuits as the sun; and wind, and rivers, but never satisfied, never contented, the more it has of the world the more it would have; and it would be no sooner filled with the streams of outward prosperity, the brooks of *honey and butter*, *Job xx. 17.* than the sea is with *all the rivers that run into it*; it is still as it was a *troubled sea that cannot rest*.

6. That all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation, *2 Pet. iii. 4.* the earth is where it was, the sun, and winds, and rivers, keep the same course that ever they did, and therefore if they have never yet been sufficient to make a happiness for man, they are never likely to be so, for they can but yield the same comfort they have yielded, we must therefore look above the sun for satisfaction, and for a new world.

7. That this world is, at the best, a weary land, *all is vanity*; for all is *full of labour*, the whole creation is made subject to this vanity, ever since man was sentenced to *eat bread in the sweat of his brows*. If we survey the whole creation we shall see all busy, all have enough to do to mind their own business, none will be a portion or happiness for man; all labour to serve him, but none a *help-meet* for him. Man cannot express how full of labour all things are, can neither number the laborious, nor measure the labours.

8. That our senses are unsatisfied, and the objects of them unsatisfying. He instanceth in those senses that perform their office with least toil, and are most capable of being pleased, *The eye is not satisfied with seeing*, but is weary of seeing always the same sight, and covets novelty and variety. *The ear* is fond at first of a pleasant song or tune; but soon nauseates it, and must have another; both are surfeited, but neither satiated, and what was most grateful becomes ungrateful. Curiosity is still inquisitive, because still unsatisfied, and the more it is humoured the more nice and peevish it grows, crying, *Give, give.*

9. The thing that hath been, it is *that* which shall be: and that which is done, is that which shall be done: and *there is no new thing* under the sun. 10. Is there *any thing*; whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. 11. *There is no remembrance of former things*, neither shall there be *any remembrance of things* that are to come, with *those* that shall come after.

Two things we are apt to take a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction in, and value our selves upon, with reference to our business and enjoyments in the world, as if they helped to save them from vanity: and Solomon here shews us our mistake in both.

(1.) The novelty of the invention, that it is such as was never known before: How grateful is the fancy of this, to think that none ever made such advances in knowledge, and such discoveries by it as we; such improvements of an estate or trade, and had the art of enjoying the gains of it as we have. Their contrivances and compositions are all despised and run down, and we boast of new

new fashions, new hypotheses, new methods, new expressions, which juggle out the old, and put them down; but this is all a mistake; *The thing that is and shall be is the same with that which hath been, and that which shall be done will be but the same with that which is done, for there is no new thing under the sun*, ver. 9. It is repeated, ver. 10. by way of question, *Is there any thing of which it may be said, with wonder, See, this is new*; there never was the like! It is an appeal to observing men, and a challenge to those that cry up the modern learning above that of the ancients. Let them name any thing which they take to be new, and, though, perhaps, we cannot make it to appear for want of the records of former times, yet, we have reason to conclude, *it has been already of old time, which was before us*. What is there in the kingdom of nature, of which we may say, *This is new*? *the works were finished from the foundation of the world*, Heb. iv. 3. things which appear new to us, as they do to children, are not so in themselves: The heavens were of old: The earth abideth for ever: The powers of nature, and the links of natural causes are still the same that ever they were. In the kingdom of providence, though the course and method of it has not such known and certain rules as that of nature, nor doth it go always in the same track, yet, in the general, it is still the same thing over and over again; mens hearts, and the corruptions of them, are still the same; their desires and pursuits, and complaints, still the same; and what God doth in his dealings with men, is according to the scripture, according to the manner, so that it is all repetition. What is surprising to us needs not be so, for there has been the like; the like strange advancements and disappointments; the like strange revolutions, and sudden turns, sudden turns of affairs; the miseries of human life have always been much the same, and mankind treads a perpetual round, and, as the sun and wind, are but where they were.

Now the design of this is,

1. To shew the folly of the children of men, both in affecting things that are new, and in imagining that they have light on such things, and pleasing and priding themselves in them. We are apt to nauseate old things, and to grow weary of what we have been long used to, as Israel of the manna, and covet, with the Athenians, still to tell and hear of some new thing, and admire this and the other as new, whereas it is all what has been. Tatianus the Assyrian, shewing the Græcians how all the arts which they valued themselves by owed their original to those nations which they counted barbarous, thus reasons with them: For shame do not call those things *Euphoræ*, inventions, which are but *Mimæ* imitations.

2. To take us off from expecting happiness and satisfaction in the creature: Why should we look for it there, where never any yet have found it? What reason have we to think that the world should be any kinder to us than it has been to those that have gone before us? Since there is nothing in it that is new, and our predecessors have made as much of it as could be made. *Your fathers did eat manna, and yet they are dead*. See John viii. 8, 9.

3. To quicken us to secure spiritual and eternal blessings. If we would be entertained with things new, we must acquaint our selves with the things of God, get a new nature, then *old things pass away, and all things become new*, 2 Cor. v. 17. The gospel puts a new song into our mouths. In heaven *all is new*, Rev. xxi. 5. all new at first, wholly unlike the present state of things, a new world indeed, Luke xx. 35. and all new to eternity, always fresh, always flourishing. This consideration should make us willing to die, that in this world there is nothing but the same over and over again, and we can expect nothing from it more or better than we have had.

2. The memorableness of the achievement, that it is such as will be known and talked of hereafter. Many think they have found satisfaction enough in this, that their names shall be perpetuated, that posterity will celebrate the actions they have done, the honours they have won, and the estates they have raised; that *their houses shall continue for ever*, Psalm xlix. 11. but herein they deceive themselves: How many former things and persons were there, which in their day looked very great, and made a mighty figure, and yet *there is no remembrance of them*, they are buried in oblivion: Here and there one person or action that was remarkable met with a kind historian, and had the good hap to be recorded, when, at the same time, there were others, no less remarkable, that were dropt; and therefore we may conclude, that *neither shall there be any remembrance of things to come*, but that which we hope to be remembered by, will either be lost or slighted.

12. I the preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem. 13. And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this fore travel hath God given to the sons of man, to be exercised therewith. 14. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. 15. That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbred. 16. I communed with

mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. 17. And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. 18. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow.

Solomon having asserted, in general, that *all is vanity*, and having given some general proofs of it, now takes the most effectual method to evince the truth of it, 1. By his own experience; he tried them all, and found them vanity. 2. By an induction of particulars; and here he begins with that which bids fairest of all other to be the happiness of a reasonable creature, and that is knowledge and learning; if this be vanity, every thing else must needs be so: Now as to this,

(1.) Solomon tells us here what trial he had made of it, and that with such advantages, that if true satisfaction could have been found in it, he had found it.

1. His high station gave him an opportunity of improving himself in all parts of learning, and particularly in politics, and the conduct of human affairs, ver. 12. He that is *the preacher* of this doctrine was king over Israel, whom all their neighbours admired as a wise and understanding people, Deut. iv. 6. He had his royal seat in Jerusalem, which then deserved better than Athens ever did to be called the eye of the world. The heart of a king is unsearchable, he has reaches of his own; and many a time a divine sentence is in his lips: It is his honour, it is his business to search out every matter. Solomon's great wealth and honour put him into a capacity of making his court the centre of learning, and the rendezvous of learned men, of furnishing himself with the best of books, and either conversing or corresponding with all the wise and knowing part of mankind then in being, who made application to him to learn of him, by which he could not but improve himself; for it is in knowledge as it is in trade, all the profit is by barter and exchange; if we have that to say which will instruct others, they will have that to say which will instruct us. Some observe, how slightly Solomon speaks of his dignity and honour: He doth not say, *I the preacher* am king, but *I was king*, no matter what I am: He speaks of it as a thing past, because worldly honours are transitory.

2. He applied himself to the improvement of these advantages, and the opportunities he had of getting wisdom, which, though never so great, will not make a man wise, unless he give his mind to it. Solomon gave his heart to seek and search out all things to be known by wisdom, ver. 13. He made it his business to acquaint himself with all the things that are done under the sun, that are done by the providence of God, or by the art and prudence of man: He set himself to get all the insight he could into philosophy and mathematicks, into husbandry and trade, merchandise and mechanicks, into the history of former ages, and the present state of other kingdoms, their laws, customs, and policies; into mens different tempers, capacities, and projects, and the methods of managing them; he set himself not only to seek, but to search, to pry into that which is most intricate, and which requires the closest application of mind, and the most vigorous and constant prosecution: Though he was a prince, he made himself a drudge to learning, begged not at its knots, nor took up short of its depths: And this he did, not merely to gratify his own genius, but to qualify himself for the service of God and his generation; and to make an experiment how far the enlargement of the knowledge would go towards the settlement and repose of the mind.

3. He made a very great progress in his studies, wonderfully improved all the parts of learning, and carried his discoveries much further than any that had been before him. He did not condemn learning, as many do, because they cannot conquer it, and will not be at the pains to make themselves masters of it; no, what he aimed at, he compassed; he saw all the works that were done under the sun, ver. 14. works of nature in the upper and lower world, all within this vortex (to use the modern gibberish) which has the sun for its centre; works of art, the product of mens wit, in a personal or social capacity: He had as much satisfaction in the success of his searches as ever any man had; he communed with his own heart concerning his attainments in knowledge with as much pleasure as ever any rich merchant had in taking account of his stock. He could say, *Lo, I have magnified and increased wisdom*, have not only gotten more of it my self, but have done more to propagate it, and bring it into reputation, than any, *than all that have been before me in Jerusalem*. Note, It becomes great men to be studious, and delight themselves most in intellectual pleasures: Where God gives great advantages of getting knowledge, he expects improvements accordingly. It is happy with a people when their princes and noblemen study to excel others as much in wisdom and useful knowledge, as they do in honour and estate; and they may do that service to the commonwealth of learning, by applying themselves to the studies that are proper for them, which meaner persons cannot do. Solomon must be acknowledged a competent judge of this matter, for he had not only got his head full

full of notions, but his heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge, of the power and benefit of it, as well as the amusement and entertainment of it; what he knew he had digested, and knew how to make use of: *Wisdom entered into his heart, and so became pleasant to his soul*, Prov. ii. 10, 11. xxii. 18.

4. He applied his studies especially to that part of learning which is most serviceable to the conduct of human life, and consequently is the most valuable, ver. 17. *I gave my heart to know the rules and dictates of wisdom, and how I might obtain it; and to know madness and folly, how I might prevent and cure it; to know the snares and insinuations of it, that I might avoid them, and guard against them, and discover its fallacies.* So industrious was Solomon to improve himself in knowledge, that he gained instruction both by the wisdom of prudent men, and by the madness of foolish men; by *the field of the slothful*, as well as of *the diligent*.

(2.) He tells us what was the result of this trial, to confirm what he had said, that *all is vanity*:

1. He found that his searches after knowledge were very toilsome, and a weariness not only to the flesh, but to the mind, ver. 13. *This sore travel*, this difficulty that there is in searching after truth, and finding it, *God has given to the sons of men, to be afflicted therewith*, as a punishment for our first parents coveting forbidden knowledge. As bread for the body, so that for the soul, must be got and eaten *in the sweat of our face*, whereas both had been had without labour if Adam had not sinned.

2. He found that the more he saw of *the works done under the sun*, the more he saw of their vanity; nay, and many times the sight occasioned him *vexation of spirit*, ver. 14. *I have seen all the works of a world full of small business, have observed what the children of men are doing, and behold, whatever men think of their own works, I see, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.* He had before pronounced all *vanity*, ver. 2. needless and unprofitable, and that which doth us no good; here he adds, it is all *vexation of spirit*, troublesome and prejudicial, and that which doth us hurt: It is *feeding upon wind*, so some read it, *Hof. xii. 1.* 1. The works themselves which we see done, are *vanity and vexation* to those that are employed in them: There is so much care in the contrivance of our worldly business, so much toil in the prosecution of it, and so much trouble in the disappointments we meet with in it, that we may well say, it is *vexation of spirit*. 2. The sight of them is *vanity and vexation of spirit* to the wise observer of them. The more we see of the world, the more we see to make us uneasy, and, with Heraclitus, to look upon all with weeping eyes. Solomon especially perceived that the knowledge of *wisdom and folly* was *vexation of spirit*, ver. 17. It vexed him to see many that had wisdom not use it, and many that had folly not strive against it. When he knew wisdom, it vexed him to see how far off it stood from the children of men, and when he saw folly, how fast he saw it bound in their hearts.

3. He found that when he had got some knowledge he could neither gain that satisfaction to himself, nor do that good to others with it, which he expected, ver. 15. It would not avail,

(1.) To redress the many grievances of human life. After all I find, that *that which is crooked will be crooked still, and cannot be made straight*. Our knowledge is it self intricate and perplexed, we must go far about, and fetch a great compass to come at it: Solomon thought to have found out a nearer way to it, but he could not; the paths of learning are as much a labyrinth as ever they were. The minds and manners of men are crooked and perverse; Solomon thought, with his wisdom and power together, to have thoroughly reformed his kingdom, and made that straight which he found crooked; but he was disappointed; all the philosophy and politicks in the world, will not restore the corrupt nature of man to its primitive rectitude; we find the insufficiency of them, both in others, and in our selves. Learning will not alter mens natural tempers, nor cure them of their sinful distempers; nor will it change the constitution of things in this world; a vale of tears it is, and so it will be, when all is done.

(2.) To make up the many deficiencies in the comfort of human life. *That which is wanting there cannot be numbred*, or counted out to us from the treasures of human learning, but what *is wanting* will still be so; all our enjoyments here, when we have done our utmost to bring them to perfection, are still lame and defective, and it cannot be helped; as they are, so they are like to be. *That which is wanting* in our knowledge, is so much, that it *cannot be numbred*: The more we know, the more we see of our own ignorance. *Who can understand his errors, his defects?*

4. Upon the whole therefore, he concluded that great scholars do but make themselves great mourners, *for in much wisdom is much grief*, ver. 18. There must be a great deal of pains taken to get it, and a great deal of care not to forget it; the more we know, the more we see there is to be known, and consequently see our work never at an end; and the more we see of our former mistakes and blunders, which occasions *much grief*. The more we see of mens different sentiments and opinions (and that is it which a great deal of our learning is conversant about) the more at a loss we are, it may be, which is in the right. *Those that increase knowledge* have so much the more quick and sensible perception of the calamities of this world, and for one discovery they make that is pleasing, perhaps, they make ten that are displeasing, and so

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they *increase sorrow*. Let us not therefore be driven off from the pursuit of any useful knowledge, but put on patience, to break through the sorrow of it; but let us despair of finding true happiness in this knowledge, and expect it only in the knowledge of God, and the careful discharge of our duty to him. *He that increaseth in heavenly wisdom, and in an experimental acquaintance with the principles, powers, and pleasures, of the spiritual and divine life, increaseth joy*, such as will shortly consummate in everlasting joy.

CHAP. II.

Solomon having pronounced all vanity, and particularly knowledge and learning, which he was so far from giving himself joy of, that he found the increase of it did but increase his sorrow, in this chapter, he goes on to shew what reason he had to be sick of this world, and with what little reason the most of men are fond of it. 1. He shews, that there is no true happiness and satisfaction to be had in mirth and pleasure, and the delights of sense, ver. 1,—11. 2. He re-considers the pretensions of wisdom, and allows it to be an excellent useful thing, and yet sees it clogged with such diminutions of its worth, that it proves insufficient to make a man happy, ver. 12,—16. 3. He enquires how far the business and wealth of this world will go towards making men happy, and concludes, from his own experience, that, to those who set their hearts upon it, it is vanity and vexation of spirit, ver. 17,—23. and if there be any good in it, it is only to those that sit loose to it, ver. 24,—26.

1. I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and behold, this also is vanity. 2. I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it? 3. I sought in mine heart to give my self unto wine (yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom) and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what *was* that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven, all the days of their life. 4. I made me great works, I builded me houses, I planted me vineyards. 5. I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits. 6. I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees. 7. I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle, above all that were in Jerusalem before me. 8. I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings, and of the provinces: I gat me men-fingers and women-fingers and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. 9. So I was great and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom remained with me. 10. And whatsoever mine eyes desired, I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy: for my heart rejoiced in all my labour, and this was my portion of all my labour. 11. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and behold, all *was* vanity and vexation of spirit, and *there was* no profit under the sun.

Solomon here, in pursuit of the *summum bonum*, the felicity of man, adjourns out of his study, his library, his laboratory, his council-chamber, where he had in vain sought for it, into the park, and the playhouse, his garden, and his summer-house, exchangeth the company of the philosophers and grave senators, for that of the wits and gallants, and the beaux esprits of his court, to try if he could find true satisfaction and happiness among them: Here he takes a great step downward, from the noble pleasures of the intellect, to the brutal ones of sense; yet, if he resolve to make a thorough trial, he must knock at this door, because here a great part of mankind imagine they have found that which he was in quest of.

(1.) He resolved to try what mirth would do, and the pleasures of wit, whether he should be happy if he constantly entertained himself and others with merry stories, and jests, banter, and drolery; if he should furnish himself with all the pretty ingenious turns and repartees he could invent or pick up, fit to be laughed over, and all the bulls and blunders, and foolish things he could hear of, fit to be ridiculed and laughed at, so that he might be always upon the merry pin.

Here is, 1. This experiment made, ver. 1. Finding that *in much wisdom is much grief*, and that those that are serious are apt to be melancholy, *I said in my heart*, i. e. to my heart, *Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth*, I will try if that will give thee satisfaction; neither the temper of his mind, nor his outward condition, had any thing in them to keep him from being merry, but

both agreed, as did all other advantages, to further it, *therefore* he resolved to take a leave this way, and said, *Enjoy pleasure*, and take thy fill of it; cast away care, and resolve to be merry; so a man may be, and yet have none of these fine things which he here got to entertain himself with; many that are poor are very merry; beggars in a barn are so to a proverb; mirth is the entertainment of the fancy, and though it comes short of the solid delights of the rational powers, yet it is to be preferred before those that are merely carnal and sensual; some distinguish man from the brutes, not only as *animal rationale*, but as *animal risibile*; therefore he that said to his soul, *Take thine ease, eat and drink*, added, *and be merry*, for it was in order to that he would eat and drink. Try therefore, saith Solomon, to laugh and be fat; laugh and be happy.

2. The judgment he passed upon this experiment: *Behold, this also is vanity*, like all the rest, it yields no true satisfaction, *ver. 2. I said presently of laughter, It is mad, or, Thou art mad*, and therefore I will have nothing to do with thee; *and of mirth*, (of all sports and recreations, and whatever pretends to be diverting) *What doth it?* or, *What dost thou?* Innocent mirth, soberly, and seasonably, and moderately used, is a good thing, fits for business, and helps to soften the toils and chagrins of human life; but when it is excessive and immoderate, it is foolish and fruitless. 1. It doth no good; *What doth it?* *Cui bono?* It will not avail to quiet a guilty conscience; no, nor to ease a sorrowful spirit; nothing more ungrateful than *singing songs to a heavy heart*: It will not satisfy the soul, nor ever yield it true content: It is but a palliative cure to the grievances of this present time: Great laughter commonly end in a sigh. 2. It doth a great deal of hurt; *it is mad*, i. e. *it makes men mad*, it transports men into many indecencies, which are a reproach to their reason and religion. They are mad that indulge themselves in it, for it estrangeth the heart from God and divine things, and insensibly eats out the power of religion. Those that love to be merry forget to be serious, and while they take the timbrel and harp, they *say to the Almighty, Depart from us*, Job xxi. 12, 14. We may, as Solomon, *prove our selves with mirth*, and judge of the state of our souls by this; How do we stand affected to it? Can we be merry and wise? Can we use it as sauce, and not as food? but we need not try, as Solomon did, whether it will make a happiness for us, for, we may take his word for it, *it is mad*; and *What doth it?* Laughter and pleasure (saith Sir William Temple) come from very different affections of the mind; for as men have no disposition to laugh at those things they are most pleased with, so they are very little pleased with many things they laugh at.

(2.) Finding himself not happy in that which pleased his fancy, he resolved next to try that which would please the palate, *ver. 3.* Since the knowledge of the creature would not satisfy, he would see what the liberal use of it would do. *I sought in my heart to give my self unto wine*, i. e. to good meat and good drink; many give themselves to these without consulting their hearts at all, nor looking any further than merely the gratification of the sensual appetite; but Solomon applied himself to it rationally, and as a man; critically, and only to make an experiment. Observe,

1. He did not allow himself any liberty in the use of the delights of sense till he had tired himself with his severe studies; till his *increase of wisdom* proved an *increase of sorrow*, he never thought of giving himself to wine. When we have spent our selves in doing good, we may then most comfortably refresh our selves with the gifts of God's bounty; then the delights of sense are rightly used, when they are used as we use cordials, only when we need them; as Timothy drank wine for his *health's sake*, 1 Tim. v. 23. *I thought to draw my flesh with wine*, so the margin reads it; or, *to wine*: Those that have addicted themselves to drinking, did at first put a force upon themselves, they drew their flesh to it, and with it; but they should remember to what miseries they hereby draw themselves.

2. He then looked upon it as folly, and it was with reluctance that he gave himself to it; as St. Paul, when he commended himself, called it a weakness, and desired to be born with in his *foolishness*, 2 Cor. xi. 1. He sought to lay hold on folly, i. e. to see the utmost that that folly would do towards making men happy; but he had like to have carried the jest (as we say) too far: He resolved the folly should not take hold of him, nor get the mastery of him, but he would lay hold on it, and keep it at a distance, yet he found it too hard for him.

3. He took care at the same time to acquaint himself with wisdom, i. e. to manage himself wisely in the use of his pleasures, so as that they should not do him any prejudice, nor disfit him to be a competent judge of them. When he *drew his flesh with wine*, he led his heart with wisdom, so the word is; kept up his pursuits after knowledge, did not make a fot of himself, nor become a slave to his pleasures, but his studies and his feasts were foils to each other, and he tried, whether both mixed together would give him that satisfaction which he could not find in either separately. This Solomon proposed to himself, but he found it *vanity*; for they that think to give themselves to wine, and yet to acquaint their hearts with wisdom, will, perhaps, deceive themselves as much as they do that think to serve both God and mammon. *Wine is a mocker*,

it is a great cheat, and it will be impossible for any man to say, thus far he will give himself to it, and no further.

4. That which he aimed at, was not to gratify his appetite, but to find out man's happiness, and this, because it pretended to be so, must be tried among the rest. Observe, the description he gives of man's happiness; it is *that good for the sons of men which they should do under the heaven all their days*. 1. That which we are to enquire after, is not so much the good we must have, we may leave that to God, but the good we must do, that ought to be our care. *Good Master, what good thing shall I do?* Our happiness consists not in being idle, but in doing aright, in being well employed: If we *do that which is good*, no doubt, we shall have comfort and *praise of the same*. 2. It is good to be done *under the heaven*, while we are here in this world, while it is day, while our doing time lasts; this is our state of work and service, it is in the other world that we must expect the retribution, thither our works will follow us. 3. It is to be done *all the days of our life*; the good we are to do we must persevere in the doing of to the end, while our doing time lasts; *the number of the days of our life*, so it is in the margin; the days of our life are numbred to us by him in whose hand our times are, and they are all to be spent as he directs. But that any man should give himself to wine, in hopes to find out in that the best way of living in this world, was an absurdity which Solomon here in the reflection condemns himself for: Is it possible that this should be the good that men should do? No; it is plainly very ill.

(3.) Perceiving quickly that it was folly to give himself to wine, he next tried the most costly entertainments and amusements of princes and great men. He had a vast income, the revenue of his crown was very great, and he laid it out so as might most please his own humour, and make him look great.

1. He gave himself much to building, both in the city and in the country; and, having been at such a vast expence in the beginning of his reign to build a house for God, he was the more excusable, if afterwards he pleased his own fancy in building for himself; he began his work at the right end, *Matt. vi. 33.* not as the people, *Hag. i. 4.* that *cited their own houses* while God's lay waste, and it prospered accordingly. In building he had the pleasure of employing the poor, and doing good to posterity. We read of Solomon's buildings, 1 Kings ix. 15, 17, 18, 19. and they were all *great works*, such as became his purse, and spirit, and great dignity. See his mistake; he enquired after the *good works* he should do, *ver. 3.* and, in pursuit of the enquiry, applied himself to *great works*: Good works indeed are truly *great*, but there are many that are reputed *great works*, which are far from being *good*; wondrous works, which are not *gracious*, *Matt. vii. 22.*

2. He took to love a garden, which is to some as bewitching as building; he *planted him vineyards*, which the soil and climate of the land of Canaan favoured; he *made him fine gardens and orchards*, *ver. 5.* and, perhaps, the art of gardening was no way inferior then to what it is now; he had not only forests of timber-trees, but *trees of all kind of fruit*, which he himself had planted; and if any worldly business would yield a man happiness, sure it must be that which Adam was employed in while he was in innocence.

3. He laid out a great deal of money in water-works, ponds, and canals; not for sport and diversion, but for use, *to water the wood that brings forth trees*, *ver. 6.* he not only planted but watered, and then left it to God to give the increase. *Springs of water* are great *blessings*, *Josh. xv. 19.* but where nature has provided them, art must direct them, to make them serviceable, *Prov. xxi. 1.*

4. He increased his family: When he proposed to himself to do *great works*, he must employ many hands, and therefore procured *servants and maidens*, which were bought with his money, and of those he *had servants born in his house*, *ver. 7.* Thus his retinue was enlarged, and his court appeared more magnificent. See *Ezra ii. 58.*

5. He did not neglect country business, but both entertained and enriched himself with that, and was not diverted from it, either by his studies, or by his pleasures. He *had large possessions of great and small cattle*, herds and flocks, as his father had before him, 1 Chron. xxvii. 29, 31. and not forgetting that his father in the beginning was a keeper of sheep. Let those that deal in cattle, neither despise their employment, nor be weary of it, remembering that Solomon puts his having *possessions of cattle* among his *great works* and his pleasures.

6. He grew very rich, and was not at all impoverished by his building and gardening, as many are, who for that reason only repent it, and call it *vanity and vexation*. Solomon scattered and yet increased: He filled his exchequer with *silver and gold*, which yet did not stagnate there, but was made to circulate through his kingdom, so that he made *silver to be in Jerusalem as stones*, 1 Kings x. 27. nay, he had the *Segullah*, the *peculiar treasure of kings*, and of the provinces, which was, for richness and rarity, more accounted of than *silver and gold*: The neighbouring kings, and the distant provinces of his own empire, sent him the richest presents they had, to obtain his favour, and the instructions of his wisdom.

7. He had every thing that was charming and diverting; all sorts of melody and musick, vocal and instrumental, *men-fingers, and women-fingers*, the best voices he could pick up, and all the wind and hand instruments that were then in use. His father had a genius for musick; but it should seem he employed it more to serve his devotion, than the son, who made it more his diversion. These are called *the delights of the sons of men*; for the gratifications of sense are the things that the generality of people set their affections upon, and take the greatest complacency in. The delights of the children of God are of quite another nature, pure, and spiritual; and heavenly, and the delights of angels.

8. He enjoyed more than ever any man did, a composition of rational and sensitive pleasures at the same time. He was in this respect *great, and increased more than all that were before him*, that he was both a wise man, and a sportsman: It was strange, and the like was never met with;

(1.) That his pleasures did not debauch his judgment and conscience: In the midst of all these entertainments, *his wisdom remained with him*, ver. 9. In the midst of all these childish delights, he preserved his spirit manly, kept the possession of his own soul, and maintained the dominion of reason over the appetites of sense; such a vast stock of wisdom had he, that it was not wasted and impaired, as any other man's would have been by this course of life! But let none be emboldened hereby to lay the reins in the neck of their appetites, presuming that they may do that, and yet retain their wisdom, because they have not such a strength of wisdom as Solomon had; nay, and Solomon was deceived, for how did *his wisdom remain with him*, when he lost his religion so far, as to build altars to strange gods, for the humouring of his strange wives? But thus far *his wisdom remained with him*, that he was master of his pleasures, and not a slave to them, and kept himself capable of making a judgment of them: He went over into the enemies country, not as a deserter, but as a *spy, to discover the nakedness of their land*.

(2.) Yet his judgment and conscience gave no check to his pleasures, nor hindered him from extracting the very quintessence of the delights of sense, ver. 10. It might be objected against his judgment in this matter, that if *his wisdom remained with him*, he could not take the liberty that was necessary to a full experimental acquaintance with it; yea, saith he, I took as great a liberty as any man could take, for *whatsoever mine eyes desired, I kept not from them*, if it could be compassed by lawful means; though never so difficult or costly; and as *I withheld not any joy from my heart*, that I had a mind to; so *I withheld not my heart from any joy*, but, with a *non-obstante* to my wisdom, I had as high a gust of my pleasures, relished and enjoyed them as much as ever any epicure did, nor was there any thing either in the circumstances of his condition, or in the temper of his spirit, to sour or embitter them, or give them any alloy: In short, 1. He had as much pleasure in his business as ever any man had: *My heart rejoiced in all my labour*; so that the toil and fatigue of that was no damp to his pleasures: 2. He had no less profit by his business, he met with no disappointment in it to give him any disturbance; *this was my portion of all my labour*: He had this added to all the rest of his pleasures, that in them he did not only see but eat the labour of his hands; and this was all he had; for indeed it was all he could expect from his labour: It sweetened his business that he enjoyed the success of it; and it sweetened his enjoyments that they were the product of his business; so that; upon the whole matter, he was certainly as happy as the world could make him.

Lastly; We have at length the judgment he deliberately gave of all this, ver. 11: When the Creator had made his great works, he reviewed them; and *behold, all was very good*, every thing pleased him; but when Solomon reviewed *all the works that his hands had wrought*, with the utmost cost and care, and the labour that he had laboured to do; in order to make himself easy and happy, nothing answered his expectation; *behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit*, he had no satisfaction in it, no advantage by it; *there was no profit under the sun*, neither by the employments; nor by the enjoyments of this world.

12. And I turned my self to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what *can the man do* that cometh after the king? *even that which hath been already done*. 13. Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly; as far as light excelleth darkness: 14. The wise man's eyes *are* in his head, but the fool walketh in darkness: and I my self perceived also; that one event happeneth to them all. 15. Then said I in my heart; As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then *more wise*? Then I said in my heart, that this also *is* vanity. 16. For *there is* no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now *is*, in the days to come shall all be forgotten: and how dieth the wise man? as the fool.

Solomon having tried what satisfaction was to be had in learning first, and then in the pleasures of sense, and having also put

both together, he here compares them one with another, and passeth a judgment upon them.

1. He sets himself to consider both wisdom and folly. He had considered these before, chap. i. 17. but lest it should be thought he was then too quick in passing a judgment upon them, he here turns himself again to behold them, to see if, upon a second view; and second thoughts, he could gain more satisfaction in the search; than he had done upon the first. He was sick of his pleasures; and as nauseating them he turned from them; that he might again apply himself to speculation; and if upon this rehearing of the cause the verdict be still the same, the judgment will surely be decisive; *for what can the man do that comes after the king?* especially such a king that had so much of this world to make the experiment upon, and so much wisdom to make it with. The baffled trial needs not be repeated; no man can expect to find more satisfaction in the world than Solomon did; nor to gain a greater insight into the principles of morality; when a man has done what he can, still it is *that which hath been already done*. Let us learn, (1.) Not to indulge ourselves in a fond conceit that we can mend that which has been well done before us; let us *esteem others better than ourselves*, and think how unfit we are to attempt the improvement of the performances of better heads and hands than ours; and rather own how much we are beholden to them, John iv. 37; 38. (2.) To acquiesce in Solomon's judgment of the things of this world, and not to think of repeating the trial; for we can never think of having such advantages as he had, to make the experiment, nor of being able to make it with a due application of mind, and so little danger to ourselves.

2. He gives wisdom the preference far before folly; let none mistake him, as if when he speaks of the vanity of human literature, he designed only to amuse men with a paradox, or were about to write (as a great wit once did) *Encomium moriæ*, a panegyric in praise of folly; no, he is maintaining sacred truths, and therefore is careful to guard against being misunderstood; I soon saw (saith he) that *there is an excellency in wisdom more than in folly*, as much as there is in light above darkness. The pleasures of wisdom; though they suffice not to make men happy, yet they vastly transcend the pleasures of wine. Wisdom enlightens the soul with surprising discoveries, and necessary directions for the right government of itself: but sensuality (for that seems to be especially the folly here meant) clouds and eclipses the mind, and is as darkness to it, it puts out mens eyes, makes them to stumble in the way and wander out of it. Or, Though wisdom and knowledge will not make a man happy; St. Paul shews a *more excellent way* than gifts, and that is grace, yet it is much better to have it than be without it, in respect of our present safety, comfort and usefulness; for *the wise man's eyes are in his head*, ver. 14. where they should be ready to discover both the dangers that are to be avoided; and the advantages that are to be improved; a wise man has not his reason to seek when he should use it, but looks about him and is quick-sighted; knows both where to step and where to stop; whereas *the fool walks in darkness*, and is ever and anon either at a loss, or at a plunge; either bewildered; that he knows not which way to go; or embarrassed that he cannot go forward. A man that is discreet and considerate has the command of his business; and acts decently and safely, as those that walk in the day; but he that is rash; and ignorant, and sottish, is continually making blunders; running upon one precipice or other; his projects, his bargains; are all foolish and ruin his affairs. Therefore *get wisdom, get understanding*.

3. Yet he maintains, that in respect of lasting happiness and satisfaction, the wisdom of this world gives a man very little advantage; for,

1. Wise men and fools fare alike. It is true, the wise man has very much the advantage of the fool, in respect of foresight and insight, and yet the greatest probabilities do so often come short of success, that *I my self perceived*, by my own experience, that *one event happeneth to them all*, ver. 14. those that are most cautious of their health are as soon sick as those that are most careless of it; and the most suspicious are imposed upon; David had observed, that *wise men die*, and are involved in the same common calamity with the fool and the brutish person, Psal. xlix. 12. See Eccl. ix. 11. Nay, it has of old been observed, that *Fortune favours fools*, and that half-witted men often thrive most, while the great projectors forecast worst for themselves. The same sickness, the same sword devours wise men and fools.

Solomon applies this mortifying observation to himself, ver. 15. that though he were a wise man he might not *glory in his wisdom*. *I said to my heart*, when it began to be proud or secure, *As it happens to the fool so it happens to me, even to me*, for thus emphatically it is expressed in the original, *so as for me*, it happens to me. Am I rich? so is many a Nabal that fares as sumptuously as I do. Is a foolish man sick; doth he get a fall? so do I; *even I*; and neither my wealth nor my wisdom will be my security: *And why was I then more wise?* Why should I take so much pains to get wisdom; when, as to this life, it will stand me in so little stead? *Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity*. Some make this a correction of what was said before; like that Psal. lxxvii. 10. *I said; this is my infirmity*; it is my folly, to think that wise men and

and fools are upon a level ; but really they seem to be so in respect of the event, and therefore it is rather a confirmation of what he had before said, That a man may be a profound philosopher and politician, and yet not be a happy man.

2. Wife men and fools are forgotten alike, *ver. 16. There is no remembrance of the wife more than of the fool.* It is promised to the righteous, that they shall be had in everlasting remembrance, and their memory shall be blessed, and they shall shortly shine as the stars ; but there is no such promise made concerning the wisdom of this world, that they shall perpetuate mens names, for those names only are perpetuated that are written in heaven, and otherwise the names of this world's wife men are written with those of its fools in the dust : *That which now is, in the days to come shall all be forgotten.* What was much talked of in one generation, is in the next as if it had never been. New persons and new things jumble out the very remembrance of the old, which in a little time are looked upon with contempt, and at length quite buried in oblivion. *Where is the wife ? Where is the disputer of this world ?* 1 Cor. i. 20. And it is upon this account that he asks, *How dies the wife man ? as the fool :* between the death of a godly and wicked man there is great difference, but not between the death of a wife man and a fool ; the fool is buried and forgotten, *Eccl. viii. 10. and no one remembered the poor man that by his wisdom delivered the city,* *Eccl. ix. 15.* so that to both the grave is a land of forgetfulness ; and wife and learned men, when they have been a while there out of sight, presently grow out of mind, a new generation ariseth that knew them not.

17. Therefore I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun, is grievous unto me : for all is vanity and vexation of spirit. 18. Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun : because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. 19. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wife man or a fool ? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wife under the sun. This is also vanity. 20. Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun. 21. For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity : yet to a man that hath not laboured therein, shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity, and a great evil. 22. For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart wherein he hath laboured under the sun. 23. For all his days are sorrows, and his travel grief ; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity. 24. *There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour.* This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God. 25. For who can eat, or who else can hasten hereunto more than I ? 26. For God giveth to a man that is good in his fight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy : but to the finner he giveth travel, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

Business is a thing that wife men have pleasure in ; they are in their element when they are in their business, and complain if they be out of business ; they may sometimes be tired with their business, but they are not weary of it, nor willing to leave it off : here therefore one would expect to have found the good that men should do, but Solomon tried this too ; after a contemplative life, and a voluptuous life, he betook himself to an active life, and found no more satisfaction in it than in the other, still it is all vanity, and vexation of spirit ; of which he gives an account in these verses. Where observe,

1. What the business was which he made trial of ; it was business under the sun, *ver. 17, 18, 19, 20.* about the things of this world, sublunary things, the riches, honours, and pleasures of this present time ; it was the business of a king. There is business above the sun, perpetual business, which is perpetual blessedness : what we do in conformity to that business, doing *God's will as it is done in heaven,* and in pursuance of that blessedness, will turn to a good account, we shall have no reason to hate that labour, nor to despair of it ; but it is labour under the sun, labour for the meat that perisheth, *John vi. 27.* *Isai. lv. 2.* that Solomon here speaks of with so little satisfaction. It was the better sort of business, not that of the hewers of wood and drawers of water, it is not so strange if men hate all that labour, but it was in wisdom, and knowledge, and equity, *ver. 21.* It was rational business which related to the government of his kingdom and the advancement of its interests. It was labour managed by the dictates of wisdom, of natural and acquired knowledge, and the directions of justice ; it was labour at the council-board, and in the courts of justice ; it

was labour wherein he shewed himself wife, *ver. 19.* which as much excels the labour wherein men only shew themselves strong, as the endowments of the mind by which we are allied to angels, do those of the body which we have in common with the brutes. That which many people have in their eye, more than any thing else, in the prosecution of their worldly business, is to shew themselves wife, to get the reputation of ingenious men, and men of sense and application.

2. His falling out with this business ; he presently grew sick of it. (1.) He hated all his labour, because he did not meet with that satisfaction in it which he expected : after he had had his fine houses, and gardens, and water-works a while he began to nauseate them, and look upon them with contempt, as children that are eager for a toy, and fond of it at first, but when they have played with it a while are weary of it and throw it away, and must have another. This speaks not a gracious hatred of these things, which is our duty, to love them less than God and religion, *Luke xiv. 26.* nor a sinful hatred of them, which is our folly, to be weary of the place God has assigned us and the work of it : but a natural hatred of them, arising from a surfeit upon them, and a sense of disappointment in them. (2.) He caused his heart to despair of all his labour, *ver. 20. i. e.* he took pains to possess himself with a deep sense of the vanity of worldly business, that it would not bring in the advantage and satisfaction he had formerly flattered himself with the hopes of. Our hearts are very loth to quit their expectations of great things from the creature, we must go about, must fetch a compass in arguing with them to convince them that there is not that in the things of this world which we are apt to promise ourselves from them. Have we so often bored and sunk into this earth for some rich mine of satisfaction, and found not the least sign or token of it, but been always frustrated in the search, and shall we not at length set our hearts at rest, and despair of ever finding it ? (3.) He came to that at length, that he hated life itself, *ver. 17.* because it is subject to so many toils and tosses, and a constant series of disappointments. God had given Solomon such largeness of heart, and such vast capacities of mind, that he experienced more than other men of the unsatisfying nature of all the things of this life, and their insufficiency to make him happy. Life itself, that is so precious to a man, and such a blessing to a good man, may become a burthen to a man of business.

3. The reasons of this quarrel with his life and labours. Two things made him weary of them.

1. That his business was so great a toil to himself : the work that he had wrought under the sun was grievous unto him, *ver. 17.* His thoughts and cares about it, and that close and constant application of mind which was requisite to it was a burthen and fatigue to him, especially when he grew old. It is the effect of a curse on that we are to work upon. Our business is said to be the work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord had cursed, *Gen. v. 29.* and of the weakning of the faculties we are to work with, and of the sentence pronounced on us, that in the sweat of our face we must eat bread. Our labour is called the vexation of our heart, *ver. 22.* it is to most a force upon themselves, so natural is it to us to love our ease. A man of business is described to be uneasy both in his going out and his coming in, *ver. 23.* (1.) He is deprived of his pleasure by day, for all his days are sorrow, not only sorrowful, but sorrow itself, nay, many sorrows and various ; his travel or labour all day is grief ; men of business, ever and anon, meet with that which vexeth them, and is an occasion of anger and sorrow to them : They are apt to fret, the more dealings they have in the world the oftner they are made to fret. The world is a vale of tears, even to those that have much of it. They that labour are said to be heavy laden, and are therefore called to come to Christ for rest, *Matth. xi. 28.* (2.) He is disturbed in his repose by night : When he is overcome with the hurries of the day, and hopes to find relief when he lays his head on his pillow, he is disappointed there ; cares hold his eyes waking, or if he sleep, yet his heart wakes, and that taketh no rest in the night. See what fools they are that make themselves drudges to the world, and do not make God their rest ; night and day they cannot but be uneasy. So that, upon the whole matter, it is all vanity, *ver. 17.* This is vanity in particular, *ver. 19, 23.* nay, it is vanity and a great evil, *ver. 21.* It is a great affront to God and a great injury to themselves, therefore a great evil ; and a vain thing to rise up early and sit up late, in pursuit of this world's goods, which were never designed to be our chief good.

2. That the gains of his business must be all left to others. Prospect of advantage is the spring of action, and the spur of industry, therefore men labour, because they hope to get by it ; if the hope fail the labour flags ; and therefore Solomon quarrelled with all the works, the great works he had made, because they would not be of any lasting advantage to himself.

(1.) He must leave them. He could not at death take them away with him, nor any share of them, nor should he return any more to them, *Job vii. 10.* nor would the remembrance of them do him any good, *Luke xvi. 25.* But I must leave all to the man that shall be after me, to the generation that comes up in the room of that which is passing away. As there were many before us who built the houses that we live in, and into whose purchases

and labours we have entered, so there shall be many after us, who shall live in the houses that we build, and enjoy the fruit of our purchases and labours. Never was land lost for want of an heir: to a gracious soul this is no uneasiness at all; why should we grudge others their turn in the enjoyments of this world, and not rather be pleased, that when we are gone, those that come after us shall fare the better for our wisdom and industry? But to a worldly mind, that seeks for its own happiness in the creature, it is a great vexation to think of leaving the beloved self behind, to I know not who.

(2.) He must leave them to those that would never have taken so much pains for them; and will thereby excuse himself from taking any pains. He that raised the estate did it by *labouring in wisdom, and knowledge, and equity*; but he that enjoys it and spends it (it may be) *hath not laboured therein*, ver. 21. and, more than that, never will; the bee toils to maintain the drone. Nay, it proves a snare to him, it is left him *for his portion*, which he rests in and takes up with; and miserable he is in being put off with it for a portion. Whereas if an estate had not come to him thus easily, who knows but he might have been both industrious and religious? Yet we ought not to perplex ourselves about this, since it may prove otherwise, that what is well got may come to one that will use it well and do good with it.

(3.) He knows not who he must leave it to, (for God makes heirs) or at least what he will prove to whom he leaves it; whether a *wise man or a fool*, a wise man that will make it more, or a fool that will bring it to nothing; *yet he shall have rule over all my labour*; and foolishly undo that which his father wisely did. It is likely, Solomon wrote this very feelingly, being afraid what Rehoboam would prove. St. Jerom; in his commentary on this passage, applies this to the good books which Solomon wrote, in which he had shewed himself wise, but he knew not into whose hands they would fall; perhaps, into the hands of a fool; who, according to the perverseness of his heart; makes an ill use of what was well written. So that; upon the whole matter, he asks, ver. 22. *What has man of all his labour?* What has he to himself; and to his own use? What has he that will go with him into another world?

3. The best use which is therefore to be made of the wealth of this world; and that is, to use it cheerfully; to take the comfort of it, and do good with it. With this he concludes the chapter, ver. 24, 25, 26. There is no true happiness to be found in these things, as to that; they are *vanity*, and if happiness be expected from them, the disappointment will be *vexation of spirit*; but he will put us in a way to make the best of them, and to avoid the inconveniences he had observed. (1.) We must not over-toil ourselves; so as in pursuit of more, to rob ourselves of the comfort of what we have. (2.) We must not over-hoard for hereafter, nor lose our own enjoyment of what we have, to lay it up for those that shall come after us; but serve ourselves out of it first. Observe;

1. What that good is which is here recommended to us; and which is the utmost pleasure and profit we can expect or extract from the business and profit of this world, and the furthest we can go to rescue it from its *vanity*; and the *vexation* that is in it.

(1.) We must do our duty with them, and be more in care how to use an estate well, for the ends for which we were intrusted with it, than how to raise or increase an estate. This is intimated, ver. 26. where those only are said to have the comfort of this life, that are good in *God's sight*; and again, *good before God*, truly good, as Noah, whom God saw *righteous before him*. We must set God always before us, and give diligence in every thing to approve ourselves to him. The Chaldee paraphrase saith, That a man should *make his soul to enjoy good, by keeping the commandments of God, and walking in the ways that are right before him*; and, ver. 25. *by studying the words of the law, and being in care about the day of the great judgment that is to come*.

(2.) We must take the comfort of them. Those things will not make a happiness for the soul, all the good we can have out of them is for the body, and if we make use of them for the comfortable support of that, so as it may be fit to serve the soul, and able to keep pace with it in the service of God, then they turn to a good account. *There is therefore nothing better for a man, as to these things, than to allow himself a sober cheerful use of them*, according as his rank and condition is, have meat and drink out of them for himself, his family; his friends, and so delight his senses, and make his *soul enjoy good*, all the good that is to be had out of them; do not lose that in pursuit of that good that is not to be had out of them. But observe, He would not have us to give up business and take our ease, that we may *eat and drink*; no, we must *enjoy good in our labour*; we must use these things, not to excuse us from, but to make us diligent and cheerful in our worldly business.

(3.) We must herein acknowledge God, we must see that it is from the hand of God, i. e. (1.) The good things themselves that we enjoy are so, not only the products of his creating power, but the gifts of his providential bounty to us. And then they are truly pleasant to us when we take them from the hand of God as a Father, when we

eye his wisdom giving us that which is fittest for us, and acquiesce in it, and taste his love and goodness, relish that, and are thankful for it. (2.) A heart to enjoy them is so; this is the gift of God's grace. Unless he gives us wisdom to make a right use of what he has in his providence bestowed upon us, and withal, peace of conscience, that we may discern God's favour in the world's smiles, we cannot make our souls enjoy any good in them.

2. Why we should have this in our eye in the management of ourselves, as to this world, and look up to God for it.

(1.) Because Solomon himself, with all his possessions, could aim at no more, and desire no better, ver. 25. *Who can hasten to this more than I?* This is that which I was ambitious of, I wished for no more; and those that have but little, in comparison with what I have, may attain to this, to be content with what they have, and enjoy the good of it. Yet Solomon could not obtain it by his own wisdom; without the special grace of God, and therefore directs us to expect it from the hand of God, and pray to him for it.

(2.) Because riches are a blessing or curse to a man, according as he has; or has not, a heart to make good use of them.

1. God makes them a reward to a good man; if with them he give him *wisdom, and knowledge, and joy*, to enjoy them cheerfully himself; and to communicate them charitably to others. To those who are *good in God's sight*, that are of a good spirit, honest and sincere, pay a deference to their God; and have a tender concern for all mankind, *God will give wisdom and knowledge in this world; and joy with the righteous in the world to come*; so the Chaldee. Or, he will give that wisdom and knowledge in things natural, moral, political and divine; which will be a constant joy and pleasure to them.

2. He makes them a punishment to an ill man, if he denies him a heart to take the comfort of them, for they do but tantalize him and tyrannize over him: *To the sinner God gives travel*, by leaving him to himself and his own foolish counsels; to *gather and to heap up* that; which, as to himself, will not only burthen him; like *thick clay*, Hab. ii. 6. but be a *witness against him*; and *eat his flesh as it were fire*, Jam. v. 3: while God delights; by an overruling providence, to give it to him that is *good before him*; for the *wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just*, and *gathered for him that will pity the poor*. Note, 1. That *godliness with contentment is great gain*; and those only have true joy that are *good in God's sight*, and that have it from him and in him: 2. Ungodliness is commonly punished with discontent and an insatiable covetousness; which are sins that are their own punishment. 3. That when God gives abundance to wicked men, it is with design to force them to a resignation to his own children; when they are of age and ready for it; as the Canaanites kept possession of the good land till the time appointed for Israel's entering upon it. Lastly, The burthen of the song is still the same, *This is also vanity; and vexation of spirit*. It is vanity at the best, even to the good man; when he has all that the sinner has scraped together; it will not make him happy without something else; but it is *vexation of spirit* to the sinner, to see what he has laid up enjoyed by him that is *good in God's sight*; and therefore evil in his. So that, take it which way you will, the conclusion is firm, *All is vanity, and vexation of spirit*.

CHAP. III.

Solomon having shewed the vanity of studies, pleasures, and business; and made it to appear, that happiness is not to be found either in the schools of the learned, or in the gardens of Epicurus, or upon the exchange, he proceeds in this chapter further to prove his doctrine, and the inference he had drawn from it, that therefore we should cheerfully content ourselves with, and make use of what God has given us, by shewing, (1.) The mutability of all human affairs, ver. 1, — 10. (2.) The immutability of the divine counsels concerning them, and the unsearchableness of those counsels; ver. 11, — 15. (3.) The vanity of worldly honour and power, which is abused for the support of oppression and persecution, if men be not governed by the fear of God in the use of it; ver. 16. And for a check to proud oppressors, and to shew them their vanity, he minds them, 1. That they will be called to account for it in the other world, ver. 17. 2. That their condition in reference to this world (for of that he speaks) is no better than that of the brutes, ver. 18, — 21. And therefore he concludes, that it is our wisdom to make use of what power we have for our own comfort, and not to oppress others with it.

1. **T**O every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: 2. A time to be born; and a time to die: a time to plant, and a time to pluck up *that which is planted*: 3. A time to kill, and a time to heal: a time to break down, and a time to build up: 4. A time to weep, and a time to laugh: a time to mourn, and a time to dance: 5. A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together: a time

a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing:
 6. A time to get, and a time to lose: a time to keep, and a time to cast away: 7. A time to rent, and a time to sew: a time to keep silence, and a time to speak:
 8. A time to love, and a time to hate: a time of war, and a time of peace. 9. What profit hath he that worketh, in that wherein he laboureth? 10. I have seen the travel which God hath given to the sons of men, to be exercised in it.

The scope of these verses is to shew,

1. That we live in a world of changes. That the several events of time and conditions of human life, are vastly different from one another, and yet occur promiscuously, and we are continually passing and repassing between them; as in the revolutions of every day and every year. It is the *wheel of nature*, Jam. iii. 6. sometimes one spoke is uppermost, and by and by the contrary, ebbing and flowing, waxing and waning; from one extreme to the other doth the *fashion of this world change*, ever did and ever will.

2. That every change concerning us, and the time and season of it is unalterably fixed and determined by a supreme power; and we must take things as they come, for it is not in our power to change what is appointed for us. And this comes in here as a reason why, when we are in prosperity, we should be easy, and yet not secure; not secure, because we live in a world of changes, and therefore have no reason to say, that *to-morrow shall be as this day*; the lowest vallies join to the highest mountains; and yet to be easy, and, as he had advised, chap. ii. 24. *to enjoy the good of our labour*, in a humble dependence upon God and his providence, neither lifted up with hopes, nor cast down with fears, but with evenness of mind expecting every event. Here is,

(1.) A general proposition laid down, that *to every thing there is a season*, ver. 1. i. e. 1. Those things which seem most contrary the one to the other, yet in the revolution of affairs will each take their turn, and come in play. The day will give place to the night, and the night again to the day. Is it summer? it will be winter: Is it winter? stay a while, and it will be summer. Every purpose has its time. The clearest sky will be clouded, *post gaudia luctus*; and the most clouded sky will clear up, *post nubila Phœbus*. 2. Those things which to us seem most casual and contingent, yet in the counsel and foreknowledge of God are punctually determined, and the very hour of them fixed, which can neither be anticipated nor adjourned a moment.

(2.) The proof and illustration of it, by the induction of particulars, twenty-eight in number, according to the days of the moon's revolution, which is always increasing or decreasing, between its full and change; some of these changes are purely the act of God, others depend more upon the will of man, but all are determined by the divine counsel: Every thing *under heaven* is thus changeable, but in heaven there is an unchangeable state, and an unchangeable counsel concerning these things.

1. There is *a time to be born, and a time to die*; these are determined by the divine counsel, and as we were born, so we must die at the time appointed, Acts xvii. 26. Some observe, that here is *a time to be born, and a time to die*, but no time to live, that is so short that it is not worth mentioning; as soon as we are born we begin to die: But as there is *a time to be born, and a time to die*, so there will be a time to rise again, a set time when they that lie in the grave shall be remembered, Job xiv. 13.

2. *A time for God to plant a nation*, as that of Israel in Canaan, and, in order to that, *to pluck up the seven nations that were planted there*, to make room for them; and at length there was a time when God spoke concerning Israel too, *to pluck up and to destroy*, when the measure of their iniquity was full, Jer. xviii. 7, 9. There is *a time for men to plant*, a time of the year, a time of their lives, but when *that which was planted* is grown fruitless and useless, it is *time to pluck it up*.

3. *A time to kill*, when the judgments of God are abroad in a land, and lay all waste; but when he returns in ways of mercy, then is *a time to heal what he has torn*, Hos. vi. 1, 2. to comfort a people after the time that he has afflicted them, Psalm xc. 15. There is a time when it is the wisdom of rulers to use severe methods, but there is a time when it is as much their wisdom to take a more gentle course, and to apply themselves to lenitives, not corrosives.

4. *A time to break down a family, an estate, a kingdom*, when it has ripened it self for destruction, but God will find *a time*, if they return and repent, to rebuild what he has broken down; there is *a time*, a set time for the Lord *to build up Zion*, Psalm cii. 13, 16. There is *a time for men to break up house, and break off trade*, and so *to break down*, which they that are busy *building up*, both must expect and prepare for.

5. *A time when God's providence calls to weep and mourn*, and when man's wisdom and grace will comply with the call, and will weep and mourn, as in times of common calamity and danger, and then it is very absurd to *laugh and dance*, and make merry, Isa. xxii. 12, 13. Ezek. xxi. 10. but then, on the other hand, there is a time when God calls to cheerfulness, *a time to laugh and dance*,

and then he expects we should *serve him with joyfulness and gladness of heart*. Observe, The time of mourning and weeping is put first, before that of laughter and dancing, for we must first *sow in tears*, and then *reap in joy*.

6. *A time to cast away stones*, by breaking down, and demolishing fortifications, when God gives peace in the borders, and there is no more occasion for them; but there is *a time to gather stones together*, for the making of strong-holds, ver. 5. A time for old towers to fall, as that in Siloam, Luke xiii. 4. and for the temple it self to be so ruined, as that *not one stone should be left upon another*; but also a time for towers and trophies too to be erected, when national affairs prosper.

7. *A time to embrace a friend*, when we find him faithful, but *a time to refrain from embracing*, when we find he is unfair or unfaithful, and that we have cause to suspect him; it is then our prudence to be shy, and keep at a distance. It is commonly applied to conjugal embraces, and explained by, 1 Cor. vii. 3, 4, 5. Joel ii. 16.

8. *A time to get*, get money, get preferment, get good bargains, and a good interest, when opportunity smiles; a time when a wife man will *seek* (so the word is) when he is setting out in the world, and has a growing family, when he is in his prime, when he has good hits, and has a run of business, then it is time for him to be busy, and make hay when the sun shines. There is *a time to get wisdom, and knowledge, and grace*, when a man has a price put into his hand; but then let him expect there will come a time to spend, when all he has will be little enough to serve his turn: Nay, there will come *a time to lose*, when what has been got fast, will be scattered as fast, and cannot be held fast.

9. *A time to keep*, when we have use for what we have got, and can keep it without running the hazard of a good conscience; but there may come *a time to cast away*, when love to God may oblige us to cast away what we have, because we must deny Christ, and wrong our consciences if we keep it, Matt. x. 37, 38. and rather to make shipwreck of all than of the faith; nay, when love to our selves may oblige us to cast it away, when it is for the saving of our lives, as it was when Jonah's mariners heaved their cargo into the sea.

10. *A time to rend the garments*, as upon occasion of some great grief, and *a time to sew them again*, in token that the grief is over: A time to undo what we have done, and a time to do again what we have undone. Jerom applies it to the rending of the Jewish church, and the sewing and making up of the gospel church thereupon.

11. *A time when it becomes us*, and is our wisdom and duty *to keep silence*, when it is an *evil time*, Amos v. 13. when our speaking would be the *casting of pearl before swine*, or when we are in danger of speaking amiss, Psalm xxxix. 2. but there is also *a time to speak* for the glory of God, and the edification of others, when silence would be the betraying of a righteous cause, and when with the mouth confession is to be made to salvation: And it is a great part of christian prudence to know when to speak, and when to hold our peace.

12. *A time to love*, and to shew our selves friendly, to be free and cheerful, and it is a pleasant time; but there may come *a time to hate*, when we shall see cause to break off all familiarity with some that we have been fond of, and to be upon the reserve, as having found reason for a suspicion which love is loth to admit.

Lastly, *A time of war*, when God draws the sword for judgment, and gives it commission to devour; when men draw the sword for justice, and the maintaining of their rights; when there is in the nations a disposition to war; but we may hope for *a time of peace*, when the sword of the Lord shall be sheathed, and he shall *make wars to cease*, Psalm xlv. 9. when the end of the war is obtained, and when there is on all sides a disposition to peace. War shall not last always, nor is there any peace to be called lasting, on this side the everlasting peace. Thus in all these changes God hath set the one over against the other, that we may *rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and weep as though we wept not*.

(3.) The inferences drawn from this observation. If our present state be subject to such vicissitude,

1. Then we must not expect our portion in it, for the good things of it are of no certainty, no continuance, ver. 9. *What profit hath he that worketh?* What can a man promise himself from planting and building, when that which he thinks is brought to perfection may so soon, and will so surely be plucked up and broken down? All our pains and care will not alter either the mutable nature of the things themselves, or the immutable counsel of God concerning them.

2. Then we must look upon our selves as upon our probation in it: There is indeed no profit in *that wherein we labour*, the thing it self when we have it will do us little good; but if we make a right use of the disposals of providence about it, there will be profit in that, ver. 10. *I have seen the travel which God hath given to the sons of men*, not to make up a happiness by it, but *to be exercised in it*, to have various graces exercised by the variety of events, to have their dependence upon God tried by every change, and to be trained up to it, and taught both *how to want, and how to abound*, Phil. iv. 12. Note, 1. There is a great deal of toil and trouble

to be seen among the children of men; labour and sorrow fill the world. 2. This toil and trouble is what God hath allotted us; he never intended this world for our rest, and therefore never appointed us to take our ease in it. 3. To many it proves a gift; God gives it men, as the physician gives a medicine to his patient, to do him good. This travel is given us to make us weary of the world, and desirous of the remaining rest. 4. It is given us that we may be kept in action, and may always have something to do; for we were none of us sent into the world to be idle. Every change cuts us out some new work, which we should be more solicitous about, than about the event.

11. He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end. 12. I know that *there is* no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life. 13. And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God. 14. I know that whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it; nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it; that men should fear before him. 15. That which hath been, is now; and that which is to be, hath already been, and God requireth that which is past.

We have seen what changes there are in the world, and must not expect to find the world more sure to us than it has been to others. Now here he shews the hand of God in all those changes, it is he that has made every creature to be that to us that it is; and therefore we must have our eye always up unto him.

1. We must make the best of *that which is*, and must believe it best for the present, and accommodate our selves to it. *He has made every thing very beautiful in his time*, ver. 11. and therefore while its time lasts we must be reconciled to it; nay, we must please our selves with the beauty of it. Note, 1. Every thing is as God has made it; it is really as he has appointed it to be, not as it appears to us. 2. That which to us seems most unpleasant; yet in its proper time is decent enough. Cold is as becoming in winter; as heat in summer; and the night in its turn is a black beauty, as the day in its turn is a bright one. 3. There is a wonderful harmony in the divine providence, and all its disposals; so that the events of it; when they come to be considered in their relations and tendencies, together with the seasons of them, will appear very beautiful, to the glory of God, and the comfort of those that trust in him: Though we see not the compleat beauty of providence, yet we shall see it, and a glorious sight it will be, when the mystery of God shall be finished; then every thing shall appear to have been done in the most proper time, and it will be the wonder of eternity, Deut. xxxii. 4. Ezek. i. 18.

2. We must wait with patience for the full discovery of that which to us seems intricate and perplexed; acknowledging that we cannot find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end, and therefore must judge nothing before the time. We are to believe that God hath made all beautiful, every thing is done well, as in creation, so in providence, and we shall see it when the end comes, but till then we are incompetent judges of it. While the picture is in drawing, and the house in building, we see not the beauty of either, but when the artist has put his last hand to them, and given them their finishing strokes, then all appears very good. We see but the middle of God's works; not from the beginning of them, then we should see how admirably the plan was laid in the divine counsels; nor to the end of them, which crowns the action, then we should see the product to be glorious, but we must expect till the veil be rent, and not arraign God's proceedings, nor pretend to pass a judgment on them. *Secret things belong not to us*.

Those words, *He hath set the world in their hearts*, are differently understood. 1. Some make them to be a reason why we may know more of God's works than we do; so Mr. Pemble; "God hath not left himself without witness of his righteous, equal, and beautiful ordering of things, but hath set it forth to be observed in the book of the world, and this he hath set in men's hearts; i. e. given man a large desire, and a power, in good measure, to comprehend and understand the history of nature, with the course of human affairs; so that if men did but give themselves to the exact observation of things, they might in most of them perceive an admirable order and contrivance." 2. Others make them to be a reason why we do not know so much of God's works as we might; so bishop Reynolds, "We have the world so much in our hearts, are so taken up with thoughts and cares of worldly things, and are so exercised in our travel concerning them, that we have neither time nor spirit to eye God's hand in them." The world has not only gained possession of the heart; but has formed prejudices there against the beauty of God's works.

3. We must be pleased with our lot in this world, and cheerfully acquiesce in the will of God concerning us, and accommo-

date our selves to it. *There is no certain, lasting good in these things, what good there is in them we are here told, ver. 12, 13. We must make a good use of them*.

(1.) For the benefit of others. All the good there is in them, is to do good with them; to our families, to our neighbours, to the poor, to the publick, to its civil and religious interests: What have we our beings, capacities, and estates for, but to be some way serviceable to our generation? We mistake, if we think we were born for our selves, no; it is our business to do good, it is in that that there is the truest pleasure, and what is so laid out is best laid up, and will turn to the best account. Observe, it is to do good in this life, which is short and uncertain; we have but a little time to be doing good in, and therefore have need to redeem time. It is in this life, where we are in a state of trial and probation for another life: Every man's life is his opportunity of doing that which will make for him in eternity.

(2.) For our own comfort. Let us make our selves easy; rejoice, and enjoy the good of his labour, as it is the gift of God, and so enjoy God in it, and taste his love, return him thanks, and make him the centre of our joy; eat and drink to his glory, and serve him with joyfulness of heart in the abundance of all things. If all things in this world be so uncertain, it is a foolish thing for men sordidly to spare for the present that they may hoard up all for hereafter; it is better to live cheerfully and usefully upon what we have, and let to morrow take thought for the things of it self. Grace and wisdom to do this is the gift of God, and it is a good gift, which crowns the gifts of his providential bounty.

4. We must be entirely satisfied in all the disposals of the divine providence, both as to personal and publick concerns, and bring our minds to them; because God in all performeth the thing that is appointed for us, acts according to the counsel of his will, and we are here told,

(1.) That that counsel cannot be altered, and therefore it is our wisdom to make a virtue of necessity, by submitting to it. It must be as God will; I know (and every one knows it that knows any thing of God) that whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever, ver. 14. He is in one mind, and who can turn him? His measures are never broke, nor is he ever put upon new counsels, but what he hath purposed shall be effected, and all the world cannot defeat or disannul it: It behoves us therefore to say, Let it be as God will, for how cross soever it may be to our designs and interests, God's will is his wisdom.

(2.) That that counsel needs not to be altered; for there is nothing amiss in it, nothing that can be amended. If we could see it altogether at one view, we should see it so perfect, that nothing can be put to it, for there is no deficiency in it, nor any thing taken from it, for there is nothing in it unnecessary, or that can be spared. As the word of God, so the works of God are each perfect in their kind, and it is presumption for us either to add to them, or to diminish from them, Deut. iv. 2. It is therefore as much our interest as our duty to bring our wills to the will of God.

5. We must study to answer God's end in all his providences, which is in general to make us religious. God doth all that men should fear before him, to convince them that there is a God above them, that has a sovereign dominion over them, at whose dispose they are, and all their ways, and in whose hands their times are, and all events concerning them; and that therefore they ought to have their eyes ever towards him, to worship and adore him, to acknowledge him in all their ways, to be careful in every thing to please him, and afraid of offending him in any thing. God thus changeth his disposals, and yet is unchangeable in his counsels, not to perplex us, much less to drive us to despair, but to teach us our duty to him, and engage us to do it. That which God designs in the government of the world, is the support and advancement of religion among men.

6. Whatever changes we see or feel in this world, we must acknowledge the inviolable steadiness of God's government. The sun riseth and setteth, the moon increaseth and decreaseth, and yet both are where they were, and their revolutions are in the same method from the beginning, according to the ordinances of heaven, so it is with the events of providence, ver. 15. That which has been is now: God has not of late begun to use this method; no, things were always as mutable and uncertain as they are now, and so they will be; that which is to be hath already been; and therefore we speak inconsiderately, when we say, Surely the world was never so bad as it is now, or, none ever met with such disappointments as we meet with; or, the times will mend; they may mend with us, and after a time to mourn there may come a time to rejoice, but that will still be liable to the common character, to the common fate. The world, as it has been, is and will be constant in inconstancy; for God requireth that which is past, i. e. repeats what he has formerly done, and deals with us no otherwise than as he has used to deal with good men, and shall the earth be forsaken for us, or the rock removed out of his place? There has no change befallen us, nor any temptation by it taken us, but such as is common to men. Let us not be proud and secure in prosperity, for God may recal a past trouble, and order that to seize us, and spoil our mirth, Psalm xxx. 7. nor let us despond in adversity, for God may call back the comforts that are past, as he did to Job.

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We may apply this to our past actions, and our behaviour under the changes that have been concerning us, God will call us to account for *that which is past*; and therefore when we enter into a new condition, we should judge our selves for our sins in our former condition, prosperous or afflicted.

16. And moreover, I saw under the sun the place of judgment, *that wickedness was there*; and the place of righteousness, *that iniquity was there*. 17. I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for *there is a time there, for every purpose, and for every work*. 18. I said in my heart, concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. 19. For that which befalleth the sons of men, befalleth beasts, even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other, yea, they have all one breath, so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. 20. All go unto one place, all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. 21. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth? 22. Wherefore I perceive that *there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works*; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?

Solomon is still shewing that every thing in this world, without piety and the fear of God, is vanity: Take away religion, and there is nothing valuable among men, nothing for the sake of which a wise man would think it worth while to live in this world: In these verses he shews that power, than which there is nothing men are more ambitious of, and life it self, than which there is nothing men are more fond, more jealous of, are nothing without the fear of God.

1. Here is the vanity of man as mighty; man in his best estate, man upon the throne, where his authority is submitted to, man upon the judgment-seat, where his wisdom and justice is appealed to, and where, if he be governed by the laws of religion, he is God's vicegerent; nay, he is of those to whom it is said, *Ye are gods*; but without the fear of God it is *vanity*, for set that aside, and,

(1.) The judge will not judge aright, will not use his power well, but will abuse it, instead of doing good with it, will do hurt with it, and then it is not only vanity, but a lie, a cheat to himself, and to all about him; *ver. 16.* Solomon perceived, by what he had read of former times, what he heard of other countries, and what he had seen in some corrupt judges, even in the land of Israel, notwithstanding all his care to prefer good men, that there was *wickedness in the place of judgment*. It is not so above the sun; far be it from God that he should do iniquity, or pervert justice; but *under the sun* it is often found that that which should be the refuge, proves the prison of oppressed innocency. *Man being in honour, and not understanding what he ought to do, becomes like the beasts that perish*, like the beasts of prey, even the most ravenous, *Psalms xlix. 20.* Not only from the persons that sat in judgment, but even in the places where judgment was in pretence administered, and righteousness was expected, *there was iniquity*; men met with the greatest wrongs in those courts to which they fled for right; this is *vanity and vexation*; for, 1. It had been better for the people to have had no judges than to have had such. 2. It will prove better for the judges they had had no power, than to have had it, and used it to such ill purposes; and so they will say another day.

(2.) The judge will himself be judged for not judging right. When Solomon saw how judgment was perverted among men, he looked up to God the Judge, and looked forward to the day of his judgment, *ver. 17.* I said in my heart, that this unrighteous judgment is not so conclusive as both sides take it to be, for there will be a review of the judgment; *God shall judge between the righteous and the wicked*, shall judge for the righteous, and plead their cause, though now it is run down, and judge against the wicked, and reckon with them for all their *unrighteous decrees*, and the *grievousness which they have prescribed*, *Isa. x. 1.* With an eye of faith we may see, not only the period, but the punishment of the pride and cruelty of oppressors, *Psalms xcii. 7.* and it is an unspeakable comfort to the oppressed that their cause will be heard over again: Let them therefore wait with patience, for there is another Judge that *standeth before the door*: And though the day of affliction may last long, yet *there is a time*, a set time for the examination of *every purpose, and every work done under the sun*. Men have their day now, but God's day is coming, *Psalms xxxvii. 13.* With God *there is a time for the re-hearing of causes, redressing of grievances, and reversing of unjust decrees*, though as yet we see it not here, *Job xxiv. 1.*

2. Here is the vanity of man as mortal. He now comes to speak more generally concerning the estate of the sons of men in this world,

their life and being on earth, and shews that their reason, without religion, and the fear of God, doth advance them but little above the beasts. Now observe,

1. What he aims at in this account of man's estate.

(1.) That God may be honoured, may be justified, may be glorified; *that they might clear God*, so the margin reads it; that if men have an uneasy life in this world, full of vanity and vexation, they may thank themselves, and lay no blame on God; let them clear him, and not say, he made this world to be man's prison, and life to be his penance; no, God made man, in respect both of honour and comfort, *little lower than the angels*; if he be mean and miserable it is his own fault. Or, *that God*, i. e. the word of God, *might manifest them*, and discover them to themselves, and so appear to be *quick and powerful*, and a Judge of men's characters; and we may be made sensible how open we lie to God's knowledge and judgment.

(2.) That men may be humbled; may be vilified; may be mortified; *that they might see that they themselves are beasts*. It is something to do to convince proud men that *they are but men*, *Psalms ix. 20.* much more to convince ill men *that they are beasts*, that, being destitute of religion, they are as *the beasts that perish*, as *the horse and the mule that have no understanding*: Proud oppressors are as beasts, as roaring lions, and ranging bears: Nay, every man that minds his body only; and not his soul, makes himself no better than a brute, and must wish at least to die like one.

2. The proof he gives of it; that which he undertakes to prove is, that a worldly, carnal, earthly-minded man has no preeminence above the beast, for all that which he sets his heart upon, placeth his confidence, and expects a happiness in, is *vanity*, *ver. 19.* Some make this to be the language of an atheist, who justifies himself in his iniquity, *ver. 16.* and evades the argument taken from the judgment to come, *ver. 17.* by pleading that there is not another life after this, but that when man dies there is an end of him, and therefore while he lives he may live as he list; but others rather think Solomon here speaks as he himself thinks, but it is to be understood in the same sense with that of his father, *Psalms xlix. 14.* *Like sheep they are laid in the grave*, and that he intends to shew the vanity of this world's wealth and honours, "by the equal condition in meer outward respects (as bishop Reynolds expounds it) between men and beasts."

(1.) The events concerning both seem much alike, *ver. 19.* *That which befalls the sons of men*, is no other than that which befalleth beasts; a great deal of knowledge of human bodies is gained by the anatomy of the bodies of brutes: When the deluge swept away the old world, the beasts perished with mankind: Horses and men are killed in battle with the same weapons of war.

(2.) The end of both to an eye of sense seems alike too: *They have all one breath*, and breathe in the same air, and it is the general description of both, that *in their nostrils is the breath of life*, *Gen. vii. 22.* and therefore, *as the one dies, so dies the other*, in their expiring there is no visible difference, but death makes much the same change with a beast that it doth with a man.

1. As to their bodies the change is altogether the same, bating the different respects that are paid to them by the survivors: Let a man be buried with the burial of an ass, *Jer. xxii. 19.* and what preeminence then has he above a beast? The touch of the dead body of a man, by the law of Moses, contracted a greater ceremonial pollution, than the touch of the carcass even of an unclean beast or fowl. And Solomon here observes, that *all go unto one place*, the dead bodies of men and beasts putrefy alike, *all are of the dust*, in their original, for we see *all turn to dust again*, in their corruption. What little reason then have we to be proud of our bodies, or any bodily accomplishments, when they must not only be reduced to the earth very shortly, but must be so in common with the beasts, and we must mingle our dust with theirs!

2. As to their spirits there is indeed a vast difference, but not a visible one, *ver. 21.* It is certain that the spirit of the sons of men at death is ascending, it goes upward to the Father of spirits, who made it, to the world of spirits, to which it is allied; it dies not with the body, but is redeemed from the power of the grave, *Psalms xlix. 15.* It goes upward to be judged, and determined to an unchangeable state. It is as certain that the spirit of the beast goes downward to the earth, it dies with the body, it perisheth and is gone at death. The soul of a beast is at death like a candle blown out, there is an end of it; whereas the soul of a man is then like a candle taken out of a dark lanthorn, which leaves the lanthorn useless indeed, but doth it self shine brighter. This great difference there is between the spirits of men and beasts; and a good reason it is, why men should set their affections on things above, and lift up their souls to those things, not suffering them, as if they were the souls of brutes, to cleave to the earth: But who knows this difference? we cannot see the ascent of the one, and the descent of the other with our bodily eyes; and therefore those that live by sense, as all carnal sensualists do, that walk in the sight of their eyes, and will not admit any other discoveries, by their own rule of judgment, have no preeminence above the beasts. Who knows? i. e. who considers this? *Isa. liii. 1.* very few; were it better considered the world would be every way better; but the most of men live as if they were to be here always, or, as if when they die there were an end of them; and it is not strange those live like beasts, who

who think they shall die like beasts; but on such the noble faculties of reason are perfectly lost and thrown away.

3. An inference drawn from it, *ver. 22. There is nothing better, as to this world, nothing better to be had out of our wealth and honour, than that a man should rejoice in his own works*, i. e. (1.) Keep a clear conscience, and never admit iniquity into the place of righteousness: *Let every man prove his own work*, and approve himself to God in it, *so shall he have rejoicing in himself alone*, Gal. vi. 4. Let him not get or keep any thing but what he can rejoice in: See 2 Cor. i. 12. (2.) Live a cheerful life. If God have prospered the work of our hands unto us, let us rejoice in it, and take the comfort of it, and not make it a burthen to our selves, and leave others the joy of it; *for that is our portion*, not the portion of our souls, miserable are they that have their portion in this life, *Psal. xvii. 14.* and fools are they that choose it, and take up with it, *Luke xii. 19.* but it is the portion of the body; that only which we enjoy is ours out of this world; it is taking what is to be had, and making the best of it; and the reason is, because none can give us a sight of *what shall be after us*; either, who shall have our estates, or what use they will make of them. When we are gone, it is likely, we shall not see what is after us, there is no correspondence that we know of between the other world and this, *Job xiv. 21.* They in the other world will be wholly taken up with that world, so that they will not care for seeing what is done in this; and while we are here, we cannot foresee *what shall be after us*, either as to our families, or the publick; *it is not for us to know the times and seasons that shall be after us*; which as it should be a restraint to our cares about this world, so it should be a reason for our concern about another. Since death is a final farewell to this life, let us send before us to another life.

CHAP. IV.

Solomon having shewed the vanity of this world, in the temptation which those in power are in to oppress and trample upon their subjects, here further shews, 1. The temptation which the oppressed are in to discontent and impatience, *ver. 1.—3.* 2. The temptation which those that love their ease are in to take their ease, and neglect business for fear of being envied, *ver. 4.—6.* 3. The folly of hoarding up abundance of worldly wealth, *ver. 7, 8.* 4. A remedy against that folly, in being made sensible of the benefit of society, and mutual assistance, *ver. 9.—12.* 5. The mutability even of royal dignity, not only through the folly of the prince himself, *ver. 13, 14.* but through the fickleness of the people, let the prince be never so discreet, *ver. 15, 16.* It is not the prerogative even of kings themselves to be exempted from the vanity and vexation that attends these things, let none else then expect it.

1. **S**O I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold, the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power, but they had no comforter. 2. Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead, more than the living which are yet alive. 3. Yea, better is he than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.

Solomon had a large soul, 1 Kings iv. 29. and it appeared by this, among other things, that he had a very tender concern for the miserable part of mankind, and took cognizance of the afflictions of the afflicted. He had taken the oppressors to task; chap. iii. 16, 17. and put them in mind of the judgment to come, to be a curb to their insolence; now here he observes the oppressed; this he did, no doubt, as a prince, to do them justice, and *avenged them of their adversaries*, for he both feared God, and regarded men: But here he doth it as a preacher, and shews,

(1.) The troubles of their condition, *ver. i.* and of those he speaks very feelingly, and with compassion. It grieved him,

1. To see might prevailing against right, to see so much oppression done under the sun; to see servants, and labourers, and poor workmen oppressed by their masters, who take advantage of their necessity to impose what terms they please upon them; debtors oppressed by cruel creditors, and creditors too by fraudulent debtors; tenants oppressed by hard landlords, and orphans by treacherous guardians; and worst of all, subjects oppressed by arbitrary princes, and unjust judges: Such oppressions are done under the sun, above the sun righteousness reigns for ever. Wise men will consider these oppressions, and contrive to do something for the relief of those that are oppressed. *Blessed is he that considers the poor.*

2. To see how those that were wronged laid to heart the wrongs that were done them. He beheld the tears of such as were oppressed, and, perhaps, could not forbear weeping with them. The world is a place of weepers, look which way we will, and we have a melancholy scene presented to us, the tears of those that are oppressed with one trouble or other. They find it is to no purpose to complain, and therefore mourn in secret, as Job, chap. xvi. 20. xxx. 28. but, *Blessed are they that mourn.*

3. To see how unable they were to help themselves. On the side of their oppressors there was power, when they had done wrong to stand to it, and make good what they had done; so that the poor were born down with a strong hand, and had no way to do themselves right. It is sad to see power misplaced, and that which was given men to enable them to do good, perverted to support them in doing wrong.

4. To see how they and their calamities were slighted by all about them. They wept and needed comfort, but there was none to do that friendly office; they had no comforter; their oppressors were big and threatening; and therefore they had no comforter; they that should have comforted them, durst not, for fear of displeasing the oppressors, and being made their companions for offering to be their comforters. It is sad to see so little humanity among men.

(2.) The temptations of their condition. Being thus hardly used, they are tempted to hate and despise life, and to envy those that are dead and in their graves, and to wish they had never been born, *ver. 2, 3.* and Solomon is ready to agree with them; for it serves to prove that *all is vanity and vexation*; since life itself is often so; and if we undervalue it, in comparison with the favour and fruition of God; as St. Paul, *Acts xx. 24.* *Phil. i. 23.* it is our praise; but if (as here) only for the sake of the miseries that attended it, it is our infirmity; and we judge therein after the flesh; as Job and Elijah did.

1. He here thinks them happy that have ended this miserable life, have done their part, and quitted the stage. *I praised the dead that are already dead*, slain outright; or that had a speedy passage through the world, made a short cut over the ocean of life; dead already, before they had well begun to live; I was pleased with their lot, and had it been in their own choice; should have praised their wisdom; for but peeping into the world, and then retiring; as not liking it: I concluded, it is better with them than with the living that are yet alive, and that is all; dragging the long and heavy chain of life, and wearing out its tedious minutes. This may be compared; not with *Job iii. 20, 21.* but with *Rev. xiv. 13.* where, in times of persecution (and such Solomon is here describing) it is not the passion of man, but the Spirit of God, that saith; *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth*. Note, The condition of the saints that are dead, and gone to rest with God, is, upon many accounts, better, and more desirable, than the condition of living saints that are yet continued in their work and warfare.

2. He thinks them happy that never began this miserable life; nay, they are happiest of all, he that has not yet been; is better than both they; better never to have been born; than be born to see the evil work that is done under the sun; to see so much wickedness committed, so much wrong done, and not only to be in no capacity to mend the matter, but to suffer ill for doing well. A good man, how calamitous a condition soever he is in in this world, cannot have cause to wish he had never been born, since he is glorifying the Lord even in the fires; and will be happy at last, for ever happy; nor ought any to wish so while they are alive, for while there is life, there is hope; a man is never undone till he is in hell.

4. ¶ Again, I considered all travel, and every right work; that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This is also vanity, and vexation of spirit. 5. The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh. 6. Better is an handful with quietness than both the hands full, with travel and vexation of spirit.

Here Solomon returns to the observation and consideration of the vanity and vexation of spirit that attends the business of this world, which he had spoken of before; chap. ii. 11.

1. If a man be acute, and dexterous, and successful in his business, he gets the ill will of his neighbours, *ver. 4.* Suppose he takes a great deal of pains, and goes through all travel, doth not get his estate easily, but it costs him a great deal of hard labour, nor doth he get it dishonestly; wrongs no man, defrauds no man, but by all the rightness of work, by applying himself to his own proper business, and managing it by all the rules of equity and fair-dealing; yet for this he is envied of his neighbour, and the more for the reputation he has got by his honesty. This shews, (1.) What little conscience most men have; that they will bear a grudge to a neighbour, give him an ill word, and do him an ill turn, only because he is more ingenious and industrious than themselves, and has more of the blessing of heaven. Cain envied Abel, Esau Jacob, and Saul David, and all for their right works. This is downright diabolism. (2.) What little comfort wise and useful men must expect to have in this world: Let them behave themselves never so cautiously, they cannot escape being envied; and who can stand before envy? *Prov. xxvii. 4.* They that excel in virtue will always be an eye-sore to those that exceed in vice; which should not discourage us from any right work, but drive us to expect the praise of it, not from men, but from God, and not to count upon satisfaction and happiness in the creature; for if right works prove vanity and vexation of spirit, no works under the sun

fun can prove otherwise: But for *every right work* a man shall be accepted of his God, and then he needs not value it, though he be *envied of his neighbour*, only it may make him love the world the less.

2. If a man be stupid and dull, and blundering in his business, he doth ill for himself, *ver. 5. The fool* that goes about his work as if *his hands were muffled and folded together*, that doth every thing awkwardly; *the sluggard* (for he is a fool) that loves his ease, and *folds his hands together*, to keep them warm, because they refuse to labour, he *eats his own flesh*, is a cannibal to himself, brings himself into such a poor condition, that he has nothing to eat but *his own flesh*, into such a desperate condition, that he is ready to eat *his own flesh* for vexation: He has a dog's life, hunger and ease. Because he sees active men that thrive in the world envied, he runs into the other extrem; and lest he should be *envied for his right works*, he doth every thing wrong, and doth not deserve to be pitied. Note, Idleness is a sin that is its own punishment.

The following words, *ver. 6. Better is a handful with quietness, than both the hands full, with travel and vexation of spirit*, may be taken, either, 1. As the sluggard's argument for the excuse of himself in his idleness; he *folds his hands together*, and abuseth and misapplieth a good truth for his justification; as if, because *a little with quietness, is better than abundance with strife*, therefore a little with idleness, is better than abundance with honest labour: Thus *wife in his own conceit* is he, *Prov. xxvi. 16.* But, 2. I rather take it as Solomon's advice to keep the mean between that *travel* which will make *a man envied*, and that slothfulness which will make a man *eat his own flesh*: Let us by honest industry lay hold on the *handful*, that we may not want necessities, but not grasp at *both the hands full*, which will but create us *vexation of spirit*. Moderate pains, and moderate gains, will do best. A man may have but a *handful* of the world, and yet may enjoy it and himself with a great deal of *quietness*, with content of mind, peace of conscience, and the love and good will of his neighbours, while many that have *both their hands full*, have more than heart could wish, have a great deal of *travel and vexation* with it. Those that cannot live of a little, it is to be feared would not live as they should, if they had never so much.

7. ¶ Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun.
8. There is one *alone*, and *there is* not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet *is there* no end of all his labour, neither is his eye satisfied with riches, neither *saith he*, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This *is* also vanity, yea, it *is* a sore travel. 9. ¶ Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. 10. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but wo to him *that is* alone when he falleth; for *he hath* not another to help him up. 11. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm *alone*? 12. And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

Here Solomon fastens upon another instance of the vanity of this world, that many times the more men have of it, the more they would have; and on this they are so intent, that they have no enjoyment of what they have. Now Solomon here shews,

(1.) That selfishness is the cause of this evil, *ver. 7, 8. There is one alone*, that minds none but himself, cares for no body, but would, if he could, be placed alone in the midst of the earth, *there is not a second*, nor doth he desire there should be, one mouth he thinks enough in a house, and grudges every thing that goes besides him. See how this covetous muckworm is here described.

1. He makes himself a meer slave to his business. Though *he has* no charge, *neither child nor brother*, none to take care of but himself, none to hang upon him or draw from him, no poor relations, nor dares he marry for fear of the expence of a family, yet *is there* no end of his labour, he is at it night and day, early and late, and will scarce allow necessary rest to himself, and those he employs: He doth not confine himself within the bounds of his own calling, but is for having a hand in any thing that he can get by. See *Psal. cxxvii. 2.*

2. He never thinks he has enough. *His eye is not satisfied with riches*. Covetousness is called *the lust of the eye*, 1 John ii. 16. because the *beholding of it with his eyes*, is all that the worldling seems to covet, *Ecc. v. 11.* He has enough for his back (as bishop Reynolds observes) for his belly, for his calling, for his family, for his living decently in the world, but he has not enough for his eyes; though he can but see it, can but count his money, and not find in his heart to use it, yet he is not easy that he has not more to regale his eyes with.

3. He denies himself the comfort of what he hath. He *bereaves his soul of good*. If our souls be *bereaved of good*, it is we our selves that do bereave them; others may bereave us of outward good, but cannot rob us of our graces and comforts, our spiritual good things;

it is our own fault, if we do not enjoy our selves; yet many are so fet upon the world, that, in pursuit of it, they *bereave their souls of good*, here and for ever; make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience, bereave themselves not only of the favour of God and eternal life, but of the pleasure of this world too, and this present life. Worldly people pretending to be wise for themselves are really enemies to themselves.

4. He has no excuse for doing this. *He has neither child nor brother*; none that he is bound to, on whom he may lay out what he has to his satisfaction while he lives; none that he has a kindness for, for whom he may lay it up to his satisfaction, and to whom he may leave it when he dies; none that are poor, or dear to him.

5. He has not consideration enough to shew himself the folly of this; he never puts this question to himself, *For whom do I labour*, thus? Do I labour, as I should, for the glory of God, and that I may have to give to those that need? Do I consider that it is but for the body that I am labouring, a dying body; it is for others, and I know not for whom; perhaps, for a fool, that will scatter it as fast as I have gathered it; perhaps, for a foe, that will be ungrateful to my memory. Note, It is wisdom for those that take pains about the world to consider who they take all this pains for; and whether it be really worth while to *bereave themselves of good*, that they may bestow it on a stranger. If men do not consider this, it *is* vanity, and *a sore travel*; they shame themselves, and vex themselves to no purpose.

(2.) That sociableness is the cure of this evil: Men are thus *for-did*, because they are all for themselves. Now Solomon shews here, by divers instances, that *it is not good for man to be alone*, Gen. ii. 18. he designs hereby to recommend to us both marriage and friendship, two things which covetous misers decline because of the charge of them; but such is the comfort and advantage of them both, if prudently contracted, that they will very well quit cost. Man in paradise it self could not be happy without a mate, and therefore is no sooner made, but matched.

1. Solomon lays this down for a truth, that *two are better than one*, and more happy jointly, than either of them could be separately; more pleased in one another than they could be in themselves only; mutually serviceable to each other's welfare, and, by an united strength, more likely to do good to others: *They have a good reward of their labour*, i. e. whatever service they do, it is returned to them another way. He that serves himself only, has himself only for his paymaster, and commonly proves more unjust and ungrateful to himself, than his friend, if he should serve him, would be to him; witness him that *labours endlessly*, and yet *bereaves his soul of good*; he has no *reward of his labour*; but he that is kind to another has a *good reward*; the pleasure and advantage of holy love will be an abundant recompence for all the *work and labour of love*.

2. Hence he infers the mischief of solitude: *Wo to him that is alone*: He lies exposed to many temptations which good company and friendship would prevent and help him to guard against: He wants that advantage which a man has by the countenance of his friend, as iron has of being sharpened by iron. A monastick life then sure was never intended for a state of perfection, nor that those should be reckoned the greatest lovers of God, that cannot find in their hearts to love any one else.

3. He proves it by divers instances of the benefit of friendship, and good conversation.

(1.) Occasional succour in an exigence. It is good for two to travel together, *for if* one happen to *fall*, and, perhaps, so as not to be able to get up himself, the other will be ready to *help him up*; a friend at need, is a friend indeed; whereas, if one travel alone, and get a fall, he may be lost for want of a little help. If a man fall into *sin*, his friend will help to *restore him with the spirit of meekness*: If he fall into trouble, his friend will help to comfort him, and assuage his grief.

(2.) Mutual warmth. As a fellow-traveller is of use (*amicus pro vehiculo*) so is a bed-fellow: *If two lie together, they have heat*: So virtuous and gracious affections are excited by good society, and christians warm one another, by *provoking one another to love, and to good works*.

(3.) United strength. If an enemy find a man alone, he is likely to *prevail against him*, with his own single strength he cannot make his part good, but if he have a second, he may do well enough, *two shall withstand him*; you shall help me against my enemy, and I will help you against yours, according to the agreement between Joab and Abishai, 2 Sam. x. 11. and so both are conquerors, whereas, acting separately, both had been conquered; as was said of the ancient Britons, when the Romans invaded them, *Dum singuli pugnant universi vincuntur*. In our spiritual warfare we may be helpful to one another, as well as in our spiritual work; next to the comfort of communion with God, is that of the communion of saints. He concludes with this proverb, *A threefold cord is not easily broken*, no more than a bundle of arrows, though each single thread, and each single arrow is. Two together he compares to a *threefold cord*, for where two are closely joined in holy love and fellowship, Christ will, by his Spirit, come to them, and make the third, as he joined himself to the two disciples going to Emmaus,

Emmaus, and then there is a threefold cord that can never be broken. They that dwell in love, dwell in God, and God in them.

13. Better is a poor and a wife child, than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished. 14. For out of prison he cometh to reign; whereas also he that is born in his kingdom becometh poor. 15. I considered all the living which walk under the sun, with the second child that shall stand up in his stead. 16. There is no end of all the people, even of all that have been before them: they also that come after, shall not rejoice in him. Surely, this also is vanity, and vexation of spirit.

Solomon was himself a king, and therefore may be allowed to speak more freely than another concerning the vanity of kingly state and dignity, which he shews here to be an uncertain thing; he had said so, *Prov. xxvii. 24. The crown doth not endure to every generation*, and his son found it so: Nothing more slippery than the highest post of honour without wisdom, and the peoples love.

1. A king is not happy unless he have wisdom, *ver. 13, 14.* He that is truly wise, prudent and pious, though he be poor in the world, and very young, and; upon both accounts, despised and little taken notice of, yet he is better, more truly valuable, and worthy of respect, is likely to do better for himself, and to be a greater blessing to his generation, than a king, than an old king, and upon both accounts venerable, both for his gravity, and for his dignity; if he be foolish, and knows not how to manage publick affairs himself, nor will be admonished and advised by others; who knows not to be admonished, i. e. will not suffer any counsel or admonition to be given him; none about him dares contradict him, or will not hearken to the counsel and admonition that is given him. It is so far from being any part of the honour of kings, that it is the greatest dishonour to them that can be; not to be admonished. Folly and wilfulness commonly go together; and those that most need admonition can worst bear it; and neither mens age nor their titles will secure them respect, if they have not true wisdom and virtue to recommend them; but those will gain men honour, even under the disadvantages of youth and poverty.

To prove the wise child better than the foolish king, he shews what each of them come to; *ver. 14.* 1. A poor man by his wisdom comes to be preferred; as Joseph, who, when he was but young, was brought out of prison to be the second man in the kingdom; to which story Solomon seems here to refer. Providence sometimes raiseth the poor out of the dust, to set them among princes; *Psal. cxlii. 7, 8.* Wisdom has not only wrought mens liberty; but their dignity; raised them from the dunghil, from the dungeon, to the throne. 2. A king by his folly and wilfulness comes to be impoverished; though he was born in his kingdom, came to it by inheritance, though he has lived to be old in it, and has had time to fill his treasures; yet, if he take ill courses, and will no more be admonished as he hath been, thinking, because he is old, he is past it, he becomes poor, his treasure is exhausted; and, perhaps, he is forced to resign his crown, and retire into privacy.

2. A king is not likely to continue, if he have not a confirmed interest in the affections of the people; this is intimated, but somewhat obscurely, in the two last verses. 1. He that is king must have a successor; a second; a child that shall stand up in his stead; his own suppose, or, perhaps, that poor and wife child spoken of, *ver. 13.* Kings, when they grow old, must have the mortification of seeing those that are to juggle them out, and stand up in their stead. 2. It is incident to the people to adore the rising sun; all the living which walk under the sun, are with the second child, are in his interests, are conversant with him, and make their court to him more than to the father, whom they look upon as going off, and despise him because his best days are done. Solomon considered this, he saw this to be the disposition of his own people; which appeared immediately after his death, in their complaints of his government, and their affectation of a change. 3. People are never long easy and satisfied; There is no end, no rest, of all the people, they are continually fond of changes; and know not what they would have. 4. This is no new thing; but it has been the way of all that have been before them; there have been instances of this in every age, even Samuel and David could not always please. 5. As it has been, so it is like to be still; they that come after will be of the same spirit, and shall not long rejoice in him that at first they seemed extream fond of: To day Hosanna; to morrow Crucify. 6. It cannot but be a great grief to princes, to see themselves thus slighted by those they have studied to oblige, and have depended upon; there is no faith in man, no steadfastness; This is vanity and vexation of spirit.

CHAP. V.

Solomon, in this chapter, discourseth, (1.) Concerning the worship of God, prescribing that as a remedy against all those vanities which he had already observed to be in wisdom, learning, pleasure, honour, power, and business; that we may not be deceived by those

things, nor have our spirits vexed with the disappointments we meet with in them, let us make conscience of our duty to God, and keep up our communion with him; but withal, he gives a necessary caution against the vanities which are too often found in religious exercises, which lose them their excellency, and render them unable to help against other vanities: If our religion be a vain religion, how great is that vanity! Let us therefore take heed of vanity, 1. In hearing the word, and offering sacrifice, *ver. 1.* 2. In prayer, *ver. 2, 3.* 3. In making vows, *ver. 4, 5, 6.* 4. In pretending to divine dreams, *ver. 7.* Now, (1.) For a remedy against those vanities, he prescribes the fear of God, *ver. 7.* (2.) To prevent the offence that might arise from the present sufferings of good people, he directs us to look up to God, *ver. 8.* (2.) Concerning the wealth of this world, and the vanity and vexation that attends it. The fruits of the earth indeed are necessary to the support of life, *ver. 9.* but as for silver and gold, and riches, 1. They are unsatisfying, *ver. 10.* 2. They are unprofitable, *ver. 11.* 3. They are disquieting, *ver. 12.* 4. They often prove hurtful and destroying, *ver. 13.* 5. They are perishing, *ver. 14.* 6. They must be left behind when we die, *ver. 15, 16.* 7. If we have not a heart to make use of them, they occasion a great deal of uneasiness, *ver. 17.* And therefore he recommends to us the comfortable use of that which God hath given us, with an eye to him that is the Giver, as the best way both to answer the end of our having it, and to obviate the mischiefs that commonly attend great estates, *ver. 18, 19, 20.* So that if we can but learn out of this chapter how to manage the business of religion, and the business of this world (which two take up most of our time) so as that both may turn to a good account, and neither our sabbath-days, nor our week-days, may be lost, we shall have reason to say, we have learned two good lessons.

1. **K**eepest thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. 2. Be not rash with thy mouth; and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God, for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. 3. For a dream cometh through the multitude of business, and a fools voice is known by multitude of words:

Solomon's design in driving us off from the world, by shewing us the vanity of that, is to drive us to God and to our duty; that we may not walk in the way of the world, but by religious rules; nor depend upon the wealth of the world, but on religious advantages; and therefore,

1. He here sends us to the house of God, to the place of publick worship; to the temple, which he himself had built at a vast expence; when he reflected with regret on all his other works, *chap. ii. 4.* he did not repent that, but reflected on it with pleasure; yet mentions it not, lest he should seem to reflect on it with pride; yet here sends those to it that would know more of the vanity of the world, and would find that happiness which is in vain sought for in the creature. David, when he was perplexed, went into the sanctuary of God; *Psal. lxxiii. 17.* Let our disappointments in the creature turn our eyes to the Creator, have recourse to the word of God's grace, and consult that, to the throne of his grace, and solicit that: In the word and prayer there is a salve for every sore.

2. He chargeth us to behave ourselves well there, that we may not miss of our end in coming thither. Religious exercises are not vain things; but if we mismanage them they become vain to us. And therefore;

1. We must address ourselves to them with all possible seriousness and care: Keep thy foot, not keep it back from the house of God, as *Prov. xxv. 17.* nor go slowly thither; as one unwilling to draw nigh to God; but look well to thy goings; ponder the path of thy feet; lest thou take a false step. Address thyself to the worship of God with a solemn pause, and take time to compose thyself for it; not going about it with precipitation; which is called, *hasting with the feet*; *Prov. xix. 2.* Keep thy thoughts from roving and wandering from the work; keep thy affections from running out towards wrong objects, for in the business of God's house there is work enough for the whole man, and all too little to be employed. Some think it alludes to the charge given to Moses and Joshua, to put off their shoes; *Exod. iii. 5. Josh. v. 15.* in token of subjection and reverence; Keep thy feet clean, *Exod. xxx. 19.*

2. We must take heed that the sacrifice we bring be not the sacrifice of fools, i. e. of wicked men; for they are fools, and their sacrifice is an abomination to the Lord, *Prov. xv. 8.* that we bring not the torn, and the lame, and the sick for sacrifice; for we are plainly told, that will not be accepted, and therefore it is folly to bring it; that we rest not in the sign and ceremony, and the outside of the performance, without regarding the sense and meaning of it; for that is the sacrifice of fools; bodily exercise, if that be all, is a jest; none but fools will think thus to please him who is a Spirit and requires the heart; and they will see their folly, when they

they find what a great deal of pains they have taken to no purpose, for want of sincerity. They are *fools*, for they *consider not that they do evil*; they think they are doing God and themselves good service, when really they are putting a great affront upon God, and a great cheat upon their own souls, by their hypocritical devotions. It is possible men may be doing evil, even then when they profess to be doing good, and even then when they do not know it, when they do not consider it. *They know not but to do evil*, so some read it: wicked minds cannot choose but sin, even in the acts of devotion. Or, they *consider not that they do evil*, i. e. they act at a venture, right or wrong, pleasing to God or not, is all one to them.

3. That we may not bring *the sacrifice of fools* we must come to God's house with hearts disposed to know and do our duty. We must be *ready to hear*, i. e. (1.) We must diligently attend to the word of God read and preached; *be swift to hear* the exposition which the priests give of the sacrifice, declaring the intent and meaning of them, and do not think it enough to gaze upon what they do, for it must be *a reasonable service*, otherwise it is *the sacrifice of fools*, (2.) We must resolve to comply with the will of God, as it is made known to us; *hearing* is often put for *obeying*, and that is it that is *better than sacrifice*, 1 Sam. xv. 22. *Isai. i. 15, 16.* We then come in a right frame to holy duties, when we come with this upon our heart, *Speak Lord, for thy servant hears. Let the word of the Lord come* (said a good man) *and if I had six hundred necks I would bow them all to the authority of it.*

4. We must be very cautious and considerate in all our approaches and addresses to God, *ver. 2. Be not rash with thy mouth*, in making either prayers, or protestations, or promises, *Let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God.* Note, (1.) When we are in the *house of God*, in solemn assemblies for religious worship, we are in a special manner before God and in his presence; there where he has promised to meet his people, where his eye is upon us, and ours ought to be unto him. (2.) We have something to say, something to utter before God, when we *draw nigh to him* in holy duties; he is one *with whom we have to do*, with whom we have business of vast importance. If we come without an errand, we shall go away without any advantage.

(3.) What we utter before God must come from *the heart*, and therefore we must not be *rash with our mouth*, never let our tongue out-run our thoughts in our devotions; the *words of our mouths* must always be the product of the *meditation of our hearts*. Thoughts are words to God, and words are but wind if they be not copied from the thoughts. Lip-labour, though never so well laboured, if that be all, is but lost labour in religion, *Matth. xv. 8, 9.*

(4.) It is not enough that what we say comes from the heart, but it must come from a composed heart, and not from a sudden heat or passion. As the mouth must not be rash, so the heart must not be hasty; we must not only think, but think twice before we speak, when we are to speak either from God in preaching, or to God in prayer, and not utter any thing indecent and undigested, 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

5. We must be *few of our words* in the presence of God, i. e. we must be reverent and deliberate; not talk to God as boldly and carelessly, as we do to one another, not speak what comes uppermost, not repeat things over and over, as we do to one another, that what we say may be understood, and remembered, and may make impression: no, when we speak to God we must consider,

1. That between him and us there is an infinite distance. *God is in heaven*, where he reigns in glory over us and all the children of men, where he is attended with an innumerable company of holy angels, and is *far exalted above all our blessing and praise.* *We are on earth*, the footstool of his throne, are mean and vile, unlike God, and utterly unworthy to receive any favour from him, or to have any communion with him, therefore we must be very grave, and humble, and serious, and observe a decorum in speaking to him, as we do when we speak to a great man that is much our superior; and in token of this, *let our words be few*, that they may be *well-chosen*, Job ix. 14. This doth not condemn all long prayers, were they not good the Pharisees had not used them for a pretence; Christ prayed all night; and we are bid to *continue in prayer*; but it condemns careless, heartless praying, *vain repetitions*, Matth. vi. 7. repeating *Pater noster* by tale. Let us speak to God, and of him, in his own words, words which the scripture teacheth, and let our words, words of our own invention, be few, lest, not speaking by rule, we speak amiss.

2. That the multiplying of words in our devotions will make them *the sacrifices of fools*, *ver. 3.* As confused dreams, frightful and perplexed, and such as disturb the sleep, are an evidence of a hurry of business which fills our head; so many words and hasty ones used in prayer, are an evidence of folly reigning in the heart, i. e. ignorance of, and unacquaintedness with, both God and ourselves; low thoughts of God, and careless thoughts of our own souls. Even in common conversation, *a fool is known by the multitude of words*; they that know least talk most, *Eccl. x. 11.* much more in devotion, there, no doubt, *a prating fool shall fall*,

Prov. x. 8, 10. shall fall short of acceptance. These are *fools* indeed, who think they shall be heard, in prayer, for their much speaking.

4. When thou voweest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it: for *he hath* no pleasure in fools; pay that which thou hast vowed. 5. Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay. 6. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin, neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands? 7. For in the multitude of dreams and many words, *there are also divers vanities*: but fear thou God. 8. If thou see the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he *that is higher than the highest*, regardeth, and *there be higher than they.*

Four things we are exhorted to in these verses:

1. To be conscientious in paying our vows. A vow is a bond upon the soul, *Numb. xxx. 2.* by which we solemnly oblige ourselves, not only in general, to that which we are already bound to, but in some particular instances, to which we were not under any antecedent obligation to honour God, and serve the interests of his kingdom among men: when under the sense of some affliction, *Psal. lxxvi. 14.* or in the pursuit of some mercy, 1 Sam. i. 11. thou hast vowed such a vow as this unto God, know that *thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, and thou canst not go back*; therefore,

(1.) *Pay it*: perform what thou hast promised, bring to God what thou hast dedicated and devoted to him, *pay that which thou hast vowed*, pay it in full, and *keep not back any part of the price*; pay it in kind, do not *alter it, or change it*, so the law was, *Lev. xxvii. 10.* Have we vowed to *give our own selves unto the Lord*? Let us then be as good as our word, act in his service, to his glory, and not sacrilegiously alienate ourselves.

(2.) *Defer not to pay it*: If it be in the power of thine hands to pay it to day, leave it not till to morrow; do not *beg day*, nor put it off to a more convenient season. By delay the sense of the obligation slackens and cools, and is in danger of wearing off; we thereby discover a loathsomeness and backwardness to perform our vow; and, *qui non est hodie cras minus aptus erit*, the longer it is put off, the more difficult it will be to bring ourselves to it: death may not only prevent the payment, but fetch thee to judgment, under the guilt of a broken vow, *Psal. lxxvii. 11.*

Two reasons are here given, why we should speedily and cheerfully pay our vows, 1. Because otherwise we affront God; we play the fool with him, as if we designed to put a trick upon him; and *God has no pleasure in fools*, (more is implied than is expressed) the meaning is, he greatly abhors such fools, and such foolish doing. *Hath he need of fools?* No, *Be not deceived, God is not mocked*, but will surely and severely reckon with those that thus play fast and loose with him. 2. Because otherwise we wrong ourselves, we lose the benefit of the making of the vow, nay, we incur the penalty for the breach of it; so that it had been better a great deal *not to have vowed*, more safe, and more to our advantage, than to *vow and not to pay*. Not to have *vowed* had been but an omission, but to *vow and not pay*, incurs the guilt of treachery and perjury; it is *lying to God*, Acts v. 4.

2. To be cautious in making our vows: and this is necessary in order to our being conscientious in performing them, *ver. 6.* (1.) We must take heed that we never vow any thing that is sinful, or may be an occasion of sin, for such a vow is ill made and must be broken. *Suffer not thy mouth*, by such a vow, *to cause thy flesh to sin*, as Herod's rash promise caused him to cut off the head of John the Baptist. (2.) We must not vow that which, through the frailty of the flesh, we have reason to fear we shall not be able to perform; as those that vow a single life, and yet know not how to keep their vow. Hereby, 1. *They shame themselves*; for they are forced to *say before the angel, that it was an error*; that either they did not mean, or did not consider what they said; and, take it which way you will, it is bad enough. When thou hast made a *vow* do not seek to evade it, nor find out excuses to get clear of the obligation of it; *say not before the priest*, who is called the *angel*, or *messenger of the Lord of hosts*, that, upon second thoughts, thou hast changed thy mind, and desirest to be absolved from the obligation of thy *vow*; but stick to it, and do not seek a hole to creep out at. Some, by *the angel*, understand the *guardian angel* which they suppose to attend every man, and to inspect what he doth. Others understand it of Christ, *the angel of the covenant*, who is present with his people in their assemblies, who searcheth the heart, and cannot be imposed upon; *provoke him not, for God's name is in him*, and he is represented as strict and jealous, *Exod. xxiii. 20, 21.* 2. They expose themselves to the wrath of God, for he is *angry at the voice of those that thus lie unto him with their mouth, and flatter him with their tongue*, and is displeased at their dissimulation, and *destroys the works of their hands*, i. e. blasts their enter-

enterprizes, and defeats those purposes which, when they made these vows, they were seeking to God for the success of. If we treacherously cancel the words of our mouth, and revoke our vows, God will justly overthrow our projects, and walk contrary, and at all adventures, with those that thus walk contrary, and at all adventures with him. It is a snare to a man after vows to make enquiry.

3. To keep up the fear of God, *ver. 7.* Many of old pretended to have known the mind of God by dreams, and were so full of them that they almost made God's people forget his name by their dreams, Jer. xxiii. 25, 26. and many perplex themselves with their frightful, or odd dreams, or with other peoples dreams, as if they foreboded this or the other disaster; and those that heed dreams shall have a multitude of them to fill their heads with; but in them all there are divers vanities, and the more if we regard them; as there are in many words, they are but like the idle impertinent chat of children and fools, and therefore never heed them, forget them instead of repeating them, lay no stress upon them, draw no disquieting conclusions from them, but *fear thou God*, have an eye to his sovereign dominion, set him before thee, keep thyself in his love, and be afraid of offending him; and then thou wilt not disturb thyself with foolish dreams; the way not to be dismayed at the signs of heaven, nor afraid of the idols of the heathen, is to fear God as king of nations, Jer. x. 2, 5, 7.

4. With that to keep down the fear of man, *ver. 8.* Set God before thee, and then if thou seeest the oppression of the poor, thou wilt not marvel at the matter, nor find fault with the divine providence, nor think the worse of the institution of magistracy, when thou seeest the ends of it thus perverted; nor of religion, when thou seeest it will not secure men from suffering wrong. Observe here,

1. A melancholy sight on earth, and such as cannot but trouble every good man that has a sense of justice, and a concern for mankind, to see the oppression of the poor, because they are poor and cannot right themselves, and the violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, oppression under colour of law, and backed with power: the kingdom, in general, may have a good government, and yet it may so happen that a particular province may be committed to an ill man, by whose male-administration justice may be perverted; so hard it is for the wisest of kings, in giving preferments, to be sure of their men, they can but redress the grievance when it doth appear.

2. A comfortable sight in heaven. When things look thus dismal, we may satisfy ourselves with this,

(1.) That though oppressors be high, God is above them, and in that very thing wherein they deal proudly, Exod. xviii. 11. God is higher than the highest of creatures, than the highest of princes, than the king that is higher than Agag, Numb. xxiv. 7. than the highest angels, the thrones and dominions of the upper world; God is the most high over all the earth, and his glory is above the heavens; before him princes are worms, the brightest but glow-worms.

(2.) That though oppressors be secure God has his eye upon them, takes notice of, and will reckon for all their violent perverting of judgment; he regardeth, not only sees it but observes it, and keeps it on record to be called over again: his eyes are upon their ways. See Job xxiv. 23.

(3.) That there is a world of angels, for there are higher than they, and are employed by the divine justice for the protecting the injured and punishing the injurious: Sennacherib bore himself high upon his potent army, but one angel proved too hard for him and all his forces. Some, by those that are higher than they, understand the great council of the nation, the presidents to whom the princes of the provinces are accountable, Dan. vi. 2. the senate that receive complaints against the proconsuls, the courts above to which appeals are made from the inferior courts, which are necessary to the good government of a kingdom. Let it be a check to oppressors that, perhaps, their superiors on earth may call them to an account; however God the Supreme in heaven will.

9. ¶ Moreover, the profit of the earth is for all: the king himself is served by the field. 10. He that loveth silver, shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance, with increase: this is also vanity.

11. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owner thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes? 12. The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep. 13. There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. 14. But those riches perish by evil travel: and he begetteth a son, and there is nothing in his hand. 15. As he came forth of his mothers womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand. 16. And this also is a sore evil,

that in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind? 17. All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow, and wrath with his sickness.

Solomon had shewed the vanity of pleasure, and gaiety, and fine works, of honour, and power, and royal dignity, and there is many a covetous worldling that will agree with him, and speak as slightly as he doth of these things; but money, he thinks, is a substantial thing, and if he can but have enough of that he is happy; and that is the mistake which Solomon attacks and attempts to rectify in these verses, and shews, that there is as much vanity in great riches, and the lust of the eye about them, as there is in the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life; and a man can make himself no more happy by hoarding an estate, than by spending it.

1. He grants that the products of the earth, for the support and comfort of human life, are valuable things, *ver. 9.* The profit of the earth is for all, man's body being made of the earth, thence has its maintenance, Job xxviii. 5. and that he hath so, and that a barren land is not made his dwelling, (as he has deserved for being rebellious, Psal. lxxviii. 6.) is an instance of God's great bounty to him. There is profit to be got out of the earth, and it is for all, all need it, it is appointed for all, there is enough for all; it is not only for all men, but for all the inferior creatures, the same ground brings grass for the cattle that brings herbs for the service of men. Israel had bread from heaven, angels food, but (which is an humbling consideration) the earth is our storehouse, and the beasts fellow-commoners with us: The king himself is served of the field, and would be ill served, would be quite starved without the products of it. This puts a great honour upon the husbandman's calling, that it is the most necessary of all other to the support of man's life, the many have the benefit of it, the mighty cannot live without it; it is for all, it is for the king himself. Those that have an abundance of the fruits of the earth, must remember they are for all, and therefore must look upon themselves but as stewards of their abundance, out of which they must give to those that need, dainty meats and soft clothing are only for some, but the fruit of the earth is for all. And even those that suck the abundance of the seas, Deut. xxxiii. 19. cannot be without the fruit of the earth, while those that have a competency of the fruit of the earth may despise the abundance of the seas.

2. He maintains, that the riches that are more than these, that are for hoarding, not for use, are vain things, and will not make a man easy or happy. That which our Saviour hath said, Luke xii. 15. that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth, is what Solomon here undertakes to prove by divers arguments.

1. The more men have, the more they would have, *ver. 10.* a man may have but a little silver and be satisfied with it, may know when he has enough, and covet no more, Godliness with contentment is great gain; I have enough, saith Jacob; I have all and abound, saith St. Paul: but, (1.) He that loves silver, and sets his heart upon it, will never think he has enough, but enlargeth his desire as hell, Hab. ii. 5. lays house to house and field to field, Isai. v. 8. and, like the daughters of the horse-leech, still cries, Give, give. Natural desires are at rest when that which is desired is obtained, but corrupt desires are insatiable; nature is content with little, grace with less, but lust with nothing. (2.) He that hath silver in abundance, and has it increasing never so fast upon him, yet doth not find that it yields any solid satisfaction to his soul; there are bodily desires which silver itself will not satisfy; if a man be hungry, ingots of silver will do no more to satisfy his hunger than clods of clay; much less will it satisfy spiritual desires; he that has never so much silver, not only covets more of that, but something else, something of another nature. They that make themselves drudges to the world are spending their labour for that which satisfieth not, Isai. lv. 2. which fills the belly, but will never fill the soul, Ezek. vii. 19.

2. The more men have, the more occasion they have for it, and the more they have to do with it; so that it is as broad as long, when goods increase, they are increased that eat them, *ver. 11.* The more meat the more mouths. Doth the estate thrive? and doth not the family at the same time grow more numerous, and the children grow up to need more? The more men have the better house they must keep, the more servants they must employ, the more guests they must entertain, the more they must give to the poor, and the more they will have hanging on them, for where the carcass is the eagles will be. What we have more than food and raiment we have it for others; and then what good is there to the owners themselves, but the pleasure of beholding them with their eyes? and a poor pleasure it is: an empty speculation is all the difference between the owners and the sharers, the owner sees that as his own, which those about him enjoy as much of the real benefit of as he; only he has the satisfaction of doing good to others, which indeed is a satisfaction to one who believes what Christ said, that it is more blessed to give than to receive: but to a covetous man, who thinks all lost that goes beside himself, it is a constant vexation to see others eat of his increase.

3. The more men have, the more care they have about it, which perplexeth them and disturbs their repose, *ver. 12.* refreshing sleep is as much the support and comfort of this life as food is. Now, 1. Those commonly sleep best that work hard, and have but what they work for: *The sleep of the labouring man is sweet*, not only because he hath tired himself with his labour, which makes his sleep the more welcome to him, and makes him sleep soundly, but because he has little to fill his head with care about, and so break his sleep. His sleep is sweet, though he eat but little, and have but little to eat, for his weariness rocks him asleep, though his belly be not full; and though he eat much, yet he can sleep well, for his labour gets him a good digestion. The sleep of the diligent christian, and his long sleep is sweet, for having spent himself and his time in the service of God, he can cheerfully return to God and repose in him as his rest. 2. Those that have every thing else, many times, cannot get a good night's sleep, but either their eyes are held waking, or their sleeps are unquiet and do not refresh them: and it is their abundance that breaks their sleep and disturbs it; both the abundance of their care, as that rich man's, who, when his ground brought forth plentifully, thought within himself, *What shall I do?* Luke xii. 18. and the abundance of what they eat and drink, which overchargeth the heart, makes them sick, and so hinders their repose. Ahasuerus, after a banquet of wine, could not sleep; and perhaps conscience of guilt, both in getting and using what they have, breaks their sleep as much as any thing; but *God giveth his beloved sleep.*

4. The more men have the more danger they are in, both of doing mischief, and of having mischief done them, *ver. 13.* *It is an evil, a sore evil*, which Solomon himself had *seen under the sun*, in this lower world, this theatre of sin and woe, *riches kept for the owners thereof* (who have been industrious to hoard them and keep them safe) *to their hurt*, they had better have been without them. (1.) Their riches *do them hurt*, make them proud and secure, and in love with the world, draw away their hearts from God and duty, and make it very difficult for them to enter into the kingdom of heaven, nay, help to shut them out of it. (2.) They *do hurt with their riches*, which not only put them into a capacity of gratifying their own lusts and living luxuriously, but give them an opportunity of oppressing others and dealing hardly with them. (3.) Many times they sustain *hurt by their riches*; they would not be envied, would not be robbed, if they were not rich. It is the fat beast that is led first to the slaughter. A very rich man (as one observes) hath sometimes been excepted out of a general pardon, both as to life and estate, for no other reason but his vast and overgrown estate; so riches *often take away the life of the owners thereof*, Prov. i. 19.

5. The more men have, the more they have to lose, and perhaps they may lose it all, *ver. 14.* Those riches that have been laid up with a great deal of pains, and kept with a great deal of care, *perish by evil travel*, by the very pains and care which they take to secure and encrease them; many a one has ruined his estate by being over-sollicitous to advance it and make it more, and hath lost all by catching at all: riches are perishing things, and all our travel about them cannot make them otherwise; they *make themselves wings and fly away*. And he that thought he should have made his son a gentleman, leaves him a beggar, he *begetteth a son*, and brings him up in the prospect of an estate, but when he dies, leaves it under a charge of debt as much as it is worth, so that *there is nothing in his hand*. This is a common case, estates that made a great shew, do not prove what they seemed, but cheat the heir.

6. How much sorer men have when they die, they must leave it all behind them, *ver. 15, 16.* *As he came forth of his mother's womb naked, so shall he return*; only as his friends, when he came naked into the world, in pity to him helped him with swaddling-cloths, so when he goes out they help him with grave-cloths, and that is all. See Job i. 21. Psal. xlix. 17. This is urged as a reason why we should be content with such things as we have, 1 Tim. vi. 7. In respect of the body we must go as we came, the dust shall return to the earth as it was; but sad is our case if the soul return as it came, for we were born in sin, and if we die in sin un sanctified, better we had never been born; and that seems to be the case of the worldling here spoken of, for he is said to *return in all points as he came*, as sinful, as miserable, and much more so. This is a *sore evil*, he thinks it so whose heart is glued to the world, that he *shall take nothing of his labour which he may carry away in his hand*; his riches will not go with him into another world, nor stand him in any stead there. If we labour in religion the grace and comfort we get by that labour we may carry away in our hearts, and shall be the better for to eternity, that is meat that endures; but if we labour only for the world to fill our hands with that, we cannot take that away with us; we are born with our hands griping, but die with them extended, letting go what we held fast. So that upon the whole matter he may well ask, *What profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?*

Note, Those that labour for the world labour for the wind; for that which hath more sound than substance, which is uncertain and always shifting its point, unsatisfying and often hurtful, which we cannot hold fast, and which, if we take up with as our

portion, we do but *feed upon wind*, Hof. xii. 1. Men will see they have *laboured for the wind*, when at death they find the profit of their labour is all gone, gone like the wind, they know not whither.

7. Those that have much, if they set their hearts upon it, have not only uncomfortable deaths, but uncomfortable lives too, *ver. 17.* This covetous worldling that is so bent upon raising an estate, *all his days he eats in darkness, and much sorrow, and it is his sickness and wrath*, i. e. he hath not only no pleasure of his estate, nor any enjoyment of it himself, for he *eats the bread of sorrow*, Psalm cxxvii. 2, but a great deal of vexation to see others eat of it. His necessary expences make him sick, make him fret, and he seems as if he were angry that himself and those about him cannot live without meat. As we read the last clause, it intimates how ill this covetous worldling can bear the common and unavoidable calamities of human life; when he is in health he *eats in darkness*, always dull with care and fear about what he has; but if he be sick, *he has much sorrow and wrath with his sickness*; he is vexed that his sickness takes him off from his business, and hinders him in his pursuits of the world; vexed that all his wealth will not give him any ease or relief; but, especially, terrified with the apprehensions of death, which his diseases are the harbingers of; of leaving this world, and the things of it behind him, which he hath set his affections upon, and removing to a world he has made no preparation for. He has not any *sorrow after a godly sort*, doth not *sorrow to repentance*, but he hath *sorrow and wrath*, is angry at the providence of God, angry at his sickness, angry at all about him, fretful and peevish, which doubles his affliction, which a good man lessens and lightens, by patience and joy in his sickness.

18. Behold, that which I have seen: *it is good and comely for one* to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun, all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion. 19. Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God. 20. For he shall not much remember the days of his life: because God answereth him in the joy of his heart.

Solomon, from the vanity of riches hoarded up, here infers, that the best course we can take is to use what we have well, to serve God with it, do good with it, and take the comfort of it to our selves and our families; this he had pressed before, chap. ii. 24. iii. 22. Observe,

(1.) What it is that is here recommended to us; not to indulge the appetites of the flesh, or to take up with present pleasures or profits for our portion, but soberly and moderately to make use of what providence has allotted for our comfortable passage through this world: We must not starve our selves either for covetousness, because we cannot afford our selves food convenient, or for eagerness in our worldly pursuits, or through excessive care and grief, but *eat and drink* what is fit for us to keep our bodies in good plight for the serving of our souls in God's service. We must not kill our selves with *labour*, and then leave others to *enjoy the good of it*, but take the comfort of that which our hands have laboured for, and that not now and then, but *all the days of our life, which God gives us*. Life is God's gift, and he has appointed us *the number of the days of our life*, Job xiv. 5. let us therefore spend those days in *serving the Lord our God with joyfulness and gladness of heart*. We must not do the business of our calling as a drudgery, and make our selves slaves to it, but we must *rejoice in our labour*, not grasp at more business than we can go through without perplexity and disquiet, take a pleasure in the calling wherein God has put us, and go on in the business of it with cheerfulness; this is to *rejoice in our labour*, whatever it is, as Zebulun in his going out, and Issachar in his tents.

(2.) What is urged to recommend it to us.

1. That *it is good and comely* to do thus; it is well, and it looks well; they that cheerfully use what God hath given them, thereby honour the giver, answer the intention of the gift, act rationally and generously, do good in the world, and make what they have turn to the best account, and this is both their credit and their comfort; *it is good and comely*; there is duty and decency in it.

2. That it is all the good we can have out of the things of this world; *it is our portion*, and in doing thus we *take our portion*, and make the best of bad: This is our part of our worldly possessions; God must have his part, the poor theirs, and our families theirs, but this is ours, it is all that falls to our lot out of them.

3. That a heart to do thus is such a gift of God's grace as crowns all the gifts of his providence. If God hath given a man *riches and wealth*, he compleats the favour, and makes that a blessing indeed, if withal he *give him power to eat thereof*, i. e. wisdom and grace to take the good of it, and to do good with it. If this is *God's gift*, we must *covet it earnestly as the best gift* relating to our enjoyments in this world.

4. That

4. That this is the way to make our own lives easy, and to relieve our selves against the many toils and troubles which our lives on earth are incident to; *ver. 20. He shall not much remember the days of his life*; the days of his sorrow and fore travel, his working days; his weeping days; he shall either forget them, or remember them as waters that pass away; he shall not much lay to heart his crosses, nor long retain the bitter relish of them; *because God answereth him in the joy of his heart*, balanceth all the grievances of his labour with the joy of it; and recompenseth him for it by giving him to *eat the labour of his hands*. If he doth not answer all his desires and expectations in the letter of them, yet he answers them; with that which is more than equivalent, *in the joy of his heart*. A chearful spirit is a great blessing; it makes the yoke of our employments easy; and the burthen of our afflictions light.

C H A P. VI.

In this chapter, (1.) The royal preacher goes on further to shew the vanity of worldly wealth, when men place their happiness in it, and are eager and inordinate in laying it up. Riches, in the hands of a man that is wise and generous, are good for something, but in the hands of a sordid, sneaking, covetous miser, they are good for nothing. 1. He takes an account of the possessions and enjoyments which such a man may have. He hath wealth, *ver. 2.* he hath children to inherit it, *ver. 3.* and lives long, *ver. 3, 6.* 2. He describes his folly in not taking the comfort of it; he hath no power to eat of it, lets strangers devour it; is never filled with good, and at last has no burial, *ver. 2; 3.* 3. He condemns it as an evil, a common evil, vanity, and a disease, *ver. 1, 2.* 4. He prefers the condition of a still-born child before the condition of such a one, *ver. 3.* The still-born child's infelicity is only negative, *ver. 4, 5.* but that of the covetous worldling is positive, he lives a great while to see himself miserable, *ver. 6.* 5. He shews the vanity of riches as pertaining only to the body, and giving no satisfaction to the mind, *ver. 7, 8.* and of those boundless desires with which covetous people vex themselves, *ver. 9.* which if they be gratified never so fully, leave a man but a man still, *ver. 10.* (2.) He concludes this discourse of the vanity of the creature with this plain inference from the whole, that it is folly to think of making up a happiness for our selves in the things of this world, *ver. 11, 12.* Our satisfaction must be in another life, not in this.

1. **T**HERE is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men: 2. A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this is vanity, and it is an evil disease. 3. ¶ If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial, I say, that an untimely birth is better than he. 4. For he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness. 5. Moreover, he hath not seen the sun, nor known any thing: this hath more rest than the other. 6. ¶ Yea, though he live a thousand years twice told, yet hath he seen no good: do not all go to one place?

Solomon had shewed in the close of the foregoing chapter how good it is to make a comfortable use of the gifts of God's providence, now here he shews the evil of the contrary; having and not using, gathering to lay up for I know not what contingent emergencies to come, not to lay out on the most urgent occasions present: This is an evil which Solomon himself saw under the sun, *ver. 1.* A great deal of evil there is under the sun, there is a world above the sun, where there is no evil, yet God causeth his sun to shine upon the evil, as well as upon the good, which is an aggravation of the evil: God has lighted up a candle for his servants to work by, but they bury their talent, as slothful and unprofitable, and so waste the light, and are unworthy of it. Solomon, as a king, inspected the manners of his subjects; and took notice of this evil as a prejudice to the publick, which is damaged, not only by mens prodigality on the one hand, but by their penuriousness on the other; as it is with the blood in the natural body, so it is with the wealth of the body politick; if, instead of circulating, it stagnates, it will be of ill consequence. Solomon, as a preacher, observed the evils that were done, that he might reprove them, and warn people against them: This evil was in his days common, and yet then there was great plenty of silver and gold, which one would think should have made people less fond of riches; the times also were peaceable, nor was there any prospect of trouble, which to some is a temptation to hoard; but no providence will of it self, unless the grace of God work with it, cure the corrupt affection that is in the carnal mind to the world, and the things of it; nay,

when riches increase, we are most apt of all to set our hearts upon them. Now, concerning this miser, observe,

(1.) The abundant reason he hath to serve God with joyfulness and gladness of heart; how well God has done for him:

1. He hath given him riches, wealth, and honour, *ver. 2.* Note, (1.) Riches and wealth commonly gain people honour among men: Though it be but an image, if it be a golden image, all people, nations, and languages will fall down and worship it. (2.) Riches, wealth, and honour are God's gifts, the gifts of his providence, and not given as his rain and sunshine, alike to all, but to some, and not to others, as God sees fit. (3.) Yet they are given to many that do not make a good use of them, to many to whom God doth not give wisdom and grace to take the comfort of them, and serve God with them. The gifts of common providence are bestowed on many to whom are denied the gifts of special grace, without which the gifts of providence often do more hurt than good.

2. He wants nothing for his soul of all that he desires; providence has been so liberal to him that he has as much as heart could wish; and more, Psalm lxxiii. 7. He doth not desire grace for his soul, the better part, all he desires is enough to gratify the sensual appetite, and that he hath, his belly is filled with these hid treasures, Psalm xvii. 14.

3. He is supposed to have a numerous family, to beget a hundred children, which are the stay and strength of his house, and as a quiver full of arrows to him, which are the honour and credit of his house, and in whom he has the prospect of having his name built up, and having all the immortality this world can give him. They are full of children, Psalm xvii. 14. while many of God's people are written childless, and stript of all.

4. To compleat his happiness, he is supposed to live many years, or rather many days, for our life is to be reckoned rather by days than years; the days of his years are many; and so healthful is his constitution, and so slowly doth age creep upon him, that they are likely to be many more: Nay, he supposeth to live a thousand years, which no man (that we know of) ever did; nay, a thousand years twice told, a small part of which time, one would think, were enough to convince men; by their own experience, of the folly both of those that expect to find all good in worldly wealth, and of those that expect to find any good in it, but in using it.

(2.) The little heart he has to use this which God gives him for the ends and purposes for which it is given him. This is his fault and folly; that he renders not again according to the benefit done unto him, and serves not the Lord God, his benefactor, with joyfulness and gladness of heart, in the abundance of all things: In the day of prosperity he is not joyful. *Tristis es & felix?* See his folly:

1. He cannot find in his heart to take the comfort of what he has himself: He has meat before him, he has wherewith to maintain himself and his family comfortably, but he has not power to eat thereof; his sordid, niggardly temper will not suffer him to lay it out, no not upon himself, no not upon that which is most necessary for himself: He has not power to reason himself out of this absurdity, to conquer his covetous humour. He is weak indeed that has not power to use what God gives him, for God gives him not that power, but withholds it from him, to punish him for his other abuses of his wealth; because he has not the will to serve God with it, God denies him the power to serve himself with it.

2. He suffers those to prey upon him that he is under no obligations to, a stranger eateth it. This is the common fate of misers, they will not trust their own children, perhaps, but retainers and hangers-on, that have the art of wheedling, insinuate themselves into them, and find ways of devouring what they have, or getting it to be left to them by their wills. God orders it so, that a stranger eats it; strangers devour his strength, Hof. vii. 9. Prov. v. 10. This may be well called vanity, and an evil disease. What we have we have in vain, if we do not use it; and that temper of mind is certainly a most wretched distemper which keeps us from using it: Our worst diseases are those that arise from the corruption of our own hearts.

3. He deprives himself of the good that he might have had of his worldly possessions; not only forfeits it, but robs himself of it, and throws it from him: His soul is not filled with good, *ver. 3.* He is still unsatisfied, and uneasy. His hands are filled with riches, his barns filled, and his bags filled, but his soul is not filled with good, no, not with that good, for it is still craving more: Nay, *ver. 7.* he has not seen good, he cannot so much as please his eye, for that is still looking further, and looking with envy on those that have more: He has not even the sensible good of an estate: Though he looks not beyond the things that are seen, yet he looks not with any true pleasure even on them.

4. He has no burial, i. e. none agreeable to his rank, no decent burial, but the burial of an ass; either through the sordidness of his temper, he will not allow himself a fashionable burial, but forbids it, or the strangers that have eaten him up, leave him so poor at last, that he has not wherewithal, or those to whom he leaves what he has, have so little esteem for his memory, and are so greedy of what they are to have from him, that they will not be at the charges of burying him handsomely, which his own children, if he had left it to them, would not have grudged him.

(3.) The

(3.) The preference which the preacher gives to an untimely birth before him: *An untimely birth*, a child that is carried from the womb to the grave, *is better than he*. Better is the fruit that drops from the tree before it is ripe, than that which is left to hang on till it is rotten. Job, in his passion, thinks the condition of *an untimely birth* better than his, when he was in adversity, Job iii. 16. but Solomon here pronounceth it better than the condition of a worldling in his greatest prosperity, when the world smiles upon him.

1. He grants the condition of *an untimely birth* upon many accounts to be very sad, ver. 4, 5. *He comes in with vanity*, for as to this world, he that is born, and dies presently, was born in vain, and he *departs in darkness*, little or no notice is taken of him, being an abortive, he has no name, or if he had, it would soon be forgotten, and buried in oblivion, it would be *covered with darkness*, as the body is with the earth: Nay, ver. 5. *he hath not seen the sun*, but from the darkness of the womb he is hurried immediately to that of the grave, and, which is worse than not being known to any, he has not *known any thing*, and therefore has come short of that which is the greatest pleasure and honour of man. Those that live in wilful ignorance, and know nothing to purpose, are no better than *an untimely birth that has not seen the sun, nor known any thing*.

2. Yet he prefers it before that of a covetous miser, *this untimely birth hath more rest than the other*, for *this* hath some rest, but *the other* has none; *this* has no trouble and disquiet, but *the other* is in a perpetual toils, and has nothing but trouble, trouble of his own making. The shorter the life is, the longer the rest; and the fewer the days, and the less we have to do with this troublesome world, the less trouble we know.

*It's better die a child at four,
Than live, and die so at fourscore.*

The reason he gives why *this* has more rest, is because *all go to one place* to rest in, and this is sooner at his rest, ver. 6. He that *lives a thousand years* goes to the same place with the child that doth not live an hour, chap. iii. 20. The grave is the place we shall all meet in. Whatever differences there may be in mens condition in this world, they must all die, are all under the same sentence, and to outward appearance their deaths are alike: The grave is to one as well as another a land of silence, of darkness, of separation from the living, and a sleeping-place: It is the common rendezvous of rich and poor, honourable and mean, learned and unlearned; the short-lived and long-lived meet in the grave, only one rides post thither, the other goes in the waggon; the dust of both mingle, and lie undistinguished.

7. All the labour of man *is* for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled. 8. For what hath the wife more than the fool? what hath the poor that knoweth to walk before the living? 9. *¶ Better is the sight of the eyes, than the wandering of the desire*: this *is* also vanity and vexation of spirit. 10. That which hath been, is named already, and it is known that it *is* man: neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he.

The preacher here further shews the vanity and folly of heaping up worldly wealth, and expecting happiness in it.

1. How much soever we toil about the world, and get out of it, we can have for our selves no more but a maintenance, ver. 7. *All the labour of man is for his mouth*, which *erecteth it of him*, Prov. xvi. 26. it is but *food and raiment*, what is more, others have, nor we: It is all *for the mouth*; *meats* are but *for the belly*, and *the belly for meats*, there is nothing for the head and heart, nothing to nourish or enrich the soul: A little will serve to sustain us comfortably, and a great deal can do no more.

2. Those that have never so much, yet are still craving; let a man labour never so much *for his mouth*, yet *the appetite is not filled*. 1. Natural desires are still returning, still pressing; a man may be fasted to day, and yet hungry to-morrow. 2. Worldly, sinful desires are insatiable, chap. v. 10. Wealth to a worldling is like drink to one in a dropy, which doth but increase the thirst. Some read the whole verse thus: *Though all a man's labour fall out to his own mind*, (ori ejus obveniat. *Yer.*) just as himself would have it, yet *his desire is not satisfied*, still he has a mind of something more. 3. The desires of the soul find nothing in the wealth of the world to give them any satisfaction at all. *The soul is not filled*, so the word is: When God gave Israel their request, he sent *harmful* into their souls, Psalm cii. 15. He was a fool that, when his barns were full, said, *Soul, take thine ease*.

3. A fool may have as much worldly wealth, and may enjoy as much of the pleasure of it as a wise man; nay, and, perhaps, not be so sensible of the vexation of it: *What has the wise more than the fool*? ver. 8. perhaps, he has not so good an estate, so good a trade, nor such good preferment as the fool hath: Nay, suppose them to be equal in their possessions, what can a wise man,

a scholar, a wit, a politician, squeeze out of his estate more than supplies for back and belly? and that a half-witted man may do. A fool can fare as well, and relish it, can dress as well, and make as good a figure in any publick appearance as a wise man; so that if there were not pleasures and honour peculiar to the mind, which *the wise man has more than the fool*, as to this world, they would be upon a level.

4. Even a poor man that has business, and is discreet, and diligent, and dextrous in the management of it, may get as comfortably through this world, as he that is loaded with an over-grown estate. Consider *what the poor hath* less than the rich, if he do but *know to walk before the living*, know how to carry himself decently, and do his duty to all, how to get an honest livelihood by his labour, how to spend his time well, and improve his opportunities; *What has he*? Why, he is better beloved, and more respected among his neighbours, and has a better interest than many a rich man that is griping and haughty. *What has he*? Why, he has as much of the comfort of this life, has *food and raiment*, and is *therewith content*, and so is as truly rich, as he that hath abundance.

5. The enjoyment of what we have, cannot but be acknowledged more rational than a greedy grasping at more, ver. 9. *Better is the sight of the eyes*, making the best of that which is present, *than the wandering of the desire*, the uneasy walking of the soul after things at a distance, and the affecting of a variety of imaginary satisfactions. He is much happier that is always content, though he has never so little, than he that is always coveting, though he has never so much. We cannot say, that *better is the sight of the eyes, than the fixing of the desire upon God*, and the resting of the soul in him; it is better to live by faith in things to come, than to live by sense, which dwells only upon present things; but *better is the sight of the eyes, than the roving of the desire after the world*, and the things of it, than which nothing more uncertain, nor more unsatisfying at the best. *This wandering of the desire is vanity and vexation of spirit*; it is *vanity* at the best, if what is desired be obtained, it proves not what we promised our selves from it, but commonly *the wandering desire* is crossed and disappointed, and then it turns to *vexation of spirit*.

6. Our lot, whatever it is, is that which is appointed us by the counsel of God, which cannot be altered, and it is therefore our wisdom to reconcile our selves to it, and cheerfully to acquiesce in it, ver. 10. *That which has been*, or, as some read it, *that which is*, and so likewise that which shall be, *is named already*, i. e. it is already determined in the divine foreknowledge, and all our care and pains cannot make it otherwise than as it is fixed; *jamta est alea*; it is therefore folly to quarrel with that which will be as it is, and wisdom to make a virtue of necessity. We shall have what pleaseth God, and let that please us.

7. Whatever we attain to in this world, still we are but men, and the greatest possessions and preferments cannot set us above the common accidents of human life. *That which has been*, and is, that busy animal that makes such a stir, and such a noise in the world, *is named already*, he that made him gave him his name, and it is known that it is man; that is his name by which he must know himself, and it is a humbling name, Gen. v. 2. He called *their name Adam*; and all theirs have the same character, red earth. Though a man could make himself master of all the treasures of kings and provinces, yet he is a man still, mean and mutable, and mortal, and may at any time be involved in the calamities that are *common to men*. It is good for rich and great men to know and consider that they are *but men*, Psalm ix. 6. *And it is known that they are but men*, let them put what face they will upon it, and, like the king of Tyre, *set their heart as the heart of God*, yet the Egyptians are men, and not gods, and it is known they are so.

8. How far soever our desires wander, and how closely soever our endeavours keep pace with them, we cannot strive with the divine providence, but must submit to the disposals of it whether we will or no. If it is man, *he may not contend with him that is mightier than he*; it is presumption to arraign God's proceedings, and to charge him with folly or iniquity; nor is it to any purpose to complain of him, for *he is in one mind, and who can turn him*? Elihu pacifies Job with this incontestable principle, that *God is greater than man*, Job xxxiii. 12. and therefore *man may not contend with him*, nor resist his judgments, when they come with commission. A man cannot with the greatest riches make his part good against the arrests of sickness or death, but must yield to his fate.

11. *¶ Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better?* 12. For who knoweth what is good for man in *this* life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?

Here, 1. Solomon lays down his conclusion which he had undertaken to prove, as that which was fully confirmed by the foregoing discourse; *there be many things that increase vanity*; the life of man is vain at the best, and there are abundance of accidents that concur to make it more so; even that which pretends to in-

crease the wealth and pleasure, doth but increase the vanity, and make it more vexations.

2. He draws some inferences from it, which serve further to convince the truth of it.

(1.) That a man is never the nearer to true happiness for the abundance that he hath in this world. *What is man the better for his wealth and pleasure, his honour and preferment? What remains to man? What residuum has he? What overplus? What real advantage, when he comes to balance his accounts? Nothing that will do him any good, or turn to account.*

(2.) That we do not know what to wish for, because that which we promise our selves most satisfaction in, often proves most vexatious to us. *Who knows what is good for a man in this life, where every thing is vanity, and any thing, even that which we most covet, may prove a calamity to us? Thoughtful people are in care to do every thing for the best, if they knew it; but as it is an instance of the corruption of our hearts, that we are apt to desire that as good for us which is really hurtful, as children that cry for knives to cut their fingers with; so is it an instance of the vanity of this world, that what, by all probable conjectures, seems to be for the best, often proves otherwise; such is our short-sightedness concerning the issues and events of things, and such broken reeds are all our creature-confidences: We know not how to advise others for the best, nor how to act our selves, because that which we apprehend likely to be for our welfare, may become a trap.*

(3.) That therefore our life upon earth is what we have no reason to take any great complacency in, or to be confident of the continuance of: It is to be reckoned by days, it is but a *vain life*, and we spend it *as a shadow*, so little is there in it substantial, so fleeting, so uncertain, so transitory is it, and so little in it to be fond of, or to be depended on. If all the comforts of life be vanity, life it self can have no great reality in it to constitute a happiness for us.

(4.) That our expectations from this world are as uncertain and deceitful as our enjoyments are: Since every thing is vanity, *Who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun? He can no more please himself with the hopes of what shall be after him, to his children and family, than with the relish of what is with him, since he can neither foresee himself, nor can any one else foretell to him what shall be after him; nor shall he have any intelligence sent him of it when he is gone; his sons come to honour, and he knows it not; so that look which way we will, Vanity of vanity, all is vanity.*

C H A P. VII.

Solomon had given many proofs and instances of the vanity of this world, and the things of it, now, in this chapter, (1.) He recommends to us some good means proper to be used for the redress of these grievances, and the arming of our selves against the mischief we are in danger of from them, that we may make the best of bad. As, 1. Care of our reputation, ver. 1. 2. Seriousness, ver. 2,—6. 3. Calmness of spirit, ver. 7,—10. 4. Prudence in the management of all our affairs, ver. 11, 12. 5. Submission to the will of God in all events, accommodating our selves to every condition, ver. 13,—15. 6. A conscientious avoiding of all dangerous extremes, ver. 16,—18. 7. Mildness and tenderness towards those that have been injurious to us, ver. 19,—22. In short, the best way to save our selves from the vexation which the vanity of the world creates us, is to keep our temper, and to maintain a strict government of our passions. (2.) He laments his own iniquity, as that which was more vexatious than any of these vanities, that mystery of iniquity, the having of many wives, by which he was drawn away from God and his duty, ver. 23,—29.

1. **A** Good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of ones birth.
2. **I**t is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart. 3. Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. 4. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. 5. It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools. 6. For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity.

In these verses Solomon lays down some great truths which seem paradoxes to the unthinking part, that is the far greatest part of mankind.

1. That the honour of virtue is really more valuable and desirable, than all the wealth and pleasure in this world, ver. 1. *A good name is before good ointment*, so it may be read; i. e. it is preferable to it, and will be rather chosen by all that are wise. *Good ointment* is here put, both for all the profits of the earth, among the products of which oil was reckoned one of the most valuable, and for all the delights of sense, for ointment and perfume rejoice the

heart, and it is called *the oil of gladness*; nay, and for the highest titles of honour with which men are dignified, for kings are anointed. *A good name is better than all riches*, Prov. xxii. 1. i. e. a name for wisdom and goodness with those that are wise and good; *the memory of the just*; this is a good that will bring a more grateful pleasure to the mind, will give a man a larger opportunity of usefulness, and will go further, and last longer than the most precious box of ointment; for Christ paid Mary for her ointment with a good name, a name in the gospels, Matt. xxvi. 13. and we are sure he always pays with advantage.

2. That all things considered, our going out of the world is a greater kindness to us than our coming into the world was. *The day of death is preferable to the birth-day*; though, as to others, there was joy when a child was born into the world, and where there is death there is lamentations, yet, as to our selves, if we have lived so as to merit a good name, *the day of our death*, which will put a period to our cares, and toils, and sorrows, and remove us to rest, and joy, and eternal satisfaction, *is better than the day of our birth*, which ushered us into a world of so much sin and trouble, vanity and vexation. We were born to uncertainty; but a good man doth not die at uncertainty. *The day of our birth* clogged our souls with the burthen of the flesh, but *the day of our death* will set them at liberty from that burthen.

3. That it will do us more good to go to a funeral than to go to a festival, ver. 2. *It is better to go to the house of mourning, and there weep with them that weep, than to go to the house of feasting, to a wedding suppers, or a wake, there to rejoice with them that do rejoice*: It will do us more good, and make better impressions upon us. We may lawfully go to both as there is occasion; our Saviour both feasted at the wedding of his friend in Cana, and wept at the grave of his friend in Bethany; and we may possibly both glorify God, and do good, and get good, in the house of feasting, but, considering how apt we are to be vain and frothy, proud and secure, and indulgent of the flesh, *it is better for us to go to the house of mourning*, not to see the pomp of the funeral, but to share in the sorrow of it, and to learn good lessons, both from the dead that is there going to his long home, and the mourners that go about the streets.

The uses to be gathered from *the house of mourning*, are, 1. By way of information, *that is the end of all men; it is the end of man* as to this world, a final period to their state here, he shall return no more to his house; *it is the end of all men, all have sinned*, and therefore *death passeth upon all*; we must thus be left by our friends as the mourners are, and thus leave as the dead doth: What is others lot will be ours; the cup is going round, it will come to our turn to pledge it shortly. 2. By way of admonition; *the living will lay it to his heart*: Will they? It were well if they would; they that are spiritually alive will lay it to heart, and as for all the survivors one would think they should; it is their own fault if they do not; for nothing more easy and natural, than by the death of others to be put in mind of our own. Some, perhaps, will lay that to heart, and consider their latter end, who would not lay a good sermon to heart.

For the further proof of this, ver. 4. he makes it the character, 1. Of a wise man, that his heart is in the house of mourning; he is much conversant with mournful subjects; and it is both an evidence and a furtherance of his wisdom; *the house of mourning* is the wise man's school, where he hath learned many a good lesson, and there, where he is serious, he is in his element: When he is in the house of mourning, his heart is there to improve the spectacles of mortality that are presented to him; nay, when he is in the house of feasting, his heart is in the house of mourning, by way of sympathy with those that are in sorrow.

2. It is the character of a fool, that his heart is in the house of mirth, his heart is all upon it to be merry and jovial, his whole delight is in sport and gaiety, in merry stories, and merry songs, and merry company, merry days, and merry nights: If he be at any time in the house of mourning, he is under a restraint, his heart at the same time is in the house of mirth, and it is his folly, and helps to make him more and more foolish.

4. That gravity and seriousness better becomes us, and is better for us, than mirth and jollity, ver. 3. The common proverb saith, that an ounce of mirth is worth a pound of sorrow, but the preacher teacheth us a contrary lesson, that *sorrow is better than laughter*, more agreeable to our present state, where we are daily sinning, and suffering our selves more or less, and daily seeing the sins and sufferings of others; while we are in a vale of tears, it is fit we should conform to the temper of the climate. It is also more for our advantage, for by the sadness that appears in the countenance the heart is often made better. Note, 1. That is best for us that is best for our souls, by which the heart is made better, though it be unpleasing to sense. 2. Sadness is often a happy means of seriousness, and that affliction which is impairing to the health, estate, and family, may be improving to the mind, and make such impressions upon that, as may alter its temper very much for the better; may make it humble and meek, loose from the world, penitent for sin, and careful of duty. *Vexatio dat intellectum. Perissem nisi perissem*. 3. It will follow, on the contrary, that by the mirth and frolicsome of the countenance the heart is made worse,

worse, more vain, and carnal, and sensual, and secure; more in love with the world, and more estranged from God, and spiritual things, *Job* xxi. 12, 14. and utterly unconcerned in the afflictions of *Joseph*, as those, *Amos* vi. 5, 6. and the king and *Haman*, *Esth.* iii. 15.

5. That it is much better for us to have our corruptions mortified by the rebuke of the wife, than to have them gratified by the song of fools, ver. 5. Many that would be very well pleased to hear the information of the wife, and much more to have their commendations and consolations, yet do not care for hearing their rebukes, that is, care not for being told of their faults, though never so wisely; but therein they are no friends to themselves, for reproofs of instruction are the way of life, *Prov.* vi. 23. and though they be not so toothsome as the song of fools, they are more wholesome. To hear, not only with patience, but pleasure, the rebuke of the wife, is a sign and means of wisdom; but to be fond of the song of fools, is a sign the mind is vain, and the way to make it more so. And what an absurd thing is it for a man to dote so much upon such a transient pleasure as the laughter of a fool is, which may fitly be compared to the burning of thorns under a pot, which makes a great noise, and a great blaze, for a little while, but is gone presently, scatters its ashes, and contributes next to nothing to the making of the pot boil, for that requires a constant fire! The laughter of a fool is noisy, and flashy, and is not an instance of true joy: This is also vanity, it deceives men to their destruction, for the end of that mirth is heaviness. Our blessed Saviour hath read us our doom; Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh; wo to you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep, *Luke* vi. 21, 25.

7. ¶ Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad, and a gift destroyeth the heart. 8. Better is the end of a thing, than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. 9. Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools. 10. Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.

Solomon had often complained before of the oppressions which he saw under the sun, which gave occasion for many melancholy speculations, and were a great discouragement to virtue and piety. Now here,

(1.) He grants the temptation to be strong, ver. 7. Surely, it is often too true, that oppression makes a wise man mad: If a wise man be much, and long oppressed, he is very apt to speak and act unlike himself, to lay the reins in the neck of his passions, and break out in indecent complaints against God and man, or to make use of unlawful, dishonourable means of relieving himself: The righteous, when the rod of the wicked rests long on their lot, are in danger of putting forth their hands to iniquity, *Psal.* cxxv. 3. When even wise men have unreasonable hardships put upon them, they have much ado to keep their temper, and to keep their place. It destroys the heart of a gift, so the latter clause may be read, i. e. even the generous heart that is ready to give gifts, and a gracious heart that is endowed with many excellent gifts, is destroyed by being oppressed. We should therefore make great allowances to those that are abused and ill dealt with, and not be severe in our censures of them, though they do not act so discreetly as they should; we know not what we should do if it were our own case.

(2.) He argues against it; let us not fret at the power and success of oppressors, nor be envious at them, for,

1. The character of oppressors is very bad. So some understand ver. 7. If he that had the reputation of a wise man becomes an oppressor, he becomes a madman, his reason is departed from him, he is no better than a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; and the gifts, the bribes he takes, the gains he seems to reap by his oppressions, do but destroy his heart, and quite extinguish the poor remains of sense and virtue in him; and therefore he is rather to be pitied than envied; let him alone, and he will act so foolishly, and drive so furiously, that in a little time he will ruin himself.

2. The issue at length will be good. Better is the end of a thing, than the beginning thereof; by faith see what the end will be, and with patience expect it. When proud men begin to oppress their poor honest neighbours, they think their power will bear them out in it, doubt not but to carry the day, and gain the point, but it will prove better in the end, than it seemed in the beginning, their power will be broken, their wealth gotten by oppression will be wasted and gone, they will be humbled and brought down, and reckoned with for their injustice, and oppressed innocency will be both relieved and recompensed. Better was the end of *Moses's* treaty with *Pharaoh*, that proud oppressor, when *Israel* was brought forth with triumph, than the beginning of it, when the tale of bricks was doubled, and every thing looked discouraging.

(3.) He arms us against it, with some necessary directions. If we would not be driven mad by oppression, but preserve the possession of our own souls,

1. We must be clothed with humility; for the proud in spirit

are they that cannot bear to be trampled upon, but grow outrageous, and fret themselves when they are hardly bested; that will break a proud man's heart which will not break a humble man's sleep. Mortify pride therefore, and a lowly spirit will easily be reconciled to a low condition.

2. We must put on patience; bearing patience, to submit to the will of God in the affliction, and waiting patience, to expect the issue in God's due time. The patient in spirit are here opposed to the proud in spirit, for where there is humility, there will be patience, those will be thankful for any thing, who own they deserve nothing at God's hand; and the patient are said to be better than the proud, they are more easy to themselves, more acceptable to others, and more likely to see a good issue of their troubles.

3. We must govern our passion with wisdom and grace, ver. 9. Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry; those that are hasty in their expectations, and cannot brook delays, are apt to be angry if they be not gratified presently; be not angry at proud oppressors, or any that are the instruments of your trouble. 1. Be not soon angry, not quick in apprehending an affront, and resenting it, nor forward to express your resentments of it. 2. Be not long angry; for though anger may come into the bosom of a wise man, and pass through it, as a wayfaring man, it rests only in the bosom of fools, there it resides, there it remains, there it has the innermost and uppermost place, there it is hugged, as that which is dear, and laid in the bosom, and lothly parted with. He therefore that would approve himself so wise as not to give place to the devil, must not let the sun go down upon his wrath, *Eph.* iv. 26, 27.

4. We must make the best of that which is, ver. 10. Take it not for granted, that the former days were better than these, nor enquire what is the cause that they were so, for therein thou dost not enquire wisely, since thou enquirest into the reason of the thing before thou art sure that the thing itself is true; and besides, thou art so much a stranger to the times past, and such an incompetent judge, even of the present times, that thou canst not expect a satisfactory answer to the enquiry, and therefore thou dost not enquire wisely; nay, the supposition is a foolish reflection upon the providence of God in the government of the world. Note, 1. It is folly to cry out of the badness of our own times, when we have more reason to cry out of the badness of our own hearts; if mens hearts were better the times would mend; and when we have more reason to be thankful that they are not worse, but that even in the worst of times we enjoy many mercies, which help to make them not only tolerable, but comfortable. 2. It is folly to cry up the goodness of former times, so as to derogate from the mercy of God to us in our own times; as if former ages had not the same things to complain of that we have, or if, perhaps, in some respects they had not, yet, as if God had been unjust and unkind to us in casting our lot in an iron age, compared with the golden ages that went before us; which arises from nothing but fretfulness and discontent, and an aptness to pick quarrels with God himself. We are not to think there is any universal decay in nature, or degeneracy in morals; God has been always good, and men always bad; and if, in some respects, the times are now worse than they have been, perhaps, in other respects they are better.

11. ¶ Wisdom is good with an inheritance: and by it there is profit to them that see the sun. 12. For wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence: but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it. 13. Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight which he hath made crooked? 14. In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him. 15. All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that longeth his life in his wickedness. 16. Be not righteous overmuch, neither make thyself over-wise: why shouldst thou destroy thyself? 17. Be not overmuch wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldst thou die before thy time? 18. It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this, yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God, shall come forth of them all. 19. Wisdom strengthneth the wife, more than ten mighty men which are in the city. 20. For there is not a just man upon earth that doth good, and sinneth not. 21. Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee. 22. For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth, that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.

Solomon, in these verses, recommends wisdom to us as the best antidote against these distempers of mind which we are liable to, by reason of the vanity and vexation of spirit that there is in the things of this world.

Here are some both of the praises and the precepts of wisdom.

(1.) The praises of wisdom: Many things are here said in its commendation, to engage us to get and retain wisdom.

1. Wisdom is necessary to the right managing and improving of our worldly possessions. *Wisdom is good with an inheritance*, i. e. an inheritance is good for little without wisdom: If a man have a great estate, if it come easily to him, by descent from his ancestors, if he have not wisdom to use it for the end for which he has it, he had better have been without it. Wisdom is not only good for the poor, to make them content and easy, but it is good for the rich too, good with riches to keep a man from getting hurt by them, and to enable a man to do good with them. *Wisdom is good of it self*, and makes a man useful, but if he have a good estate with it, that will put him into a greater capacity of being useful, and with his wealth he may be more serviceable to his generation than he could have been without it, and *make friends to himself*, Luke xvi. 9. *Wisdom is as good as an inheritance, yea, better too*, so the margin reads it; it is more our own, more our honour, will make us greater blessings, will remain longer with us, and turn to a better account.

2. It is of great advantage to us throughout the whole course of our passage through this world; *by it there is real profit to them that see the sun*, both to those that have it, and to their contemporaries. It is pleasant to *see the sun*, chap. xi. 7. but that pleasure is not comparable to the pleasure of wisdom. The light of this world is an advantage to us in doing the business of this world; *John xi. 9.* but to them that have that advantage, unless withal they have wisdom, wherewith to manage their business, that advantage is worth little to them. The clearness of the eye of the understanding is of greater use to us than bodily eye-sight.

3. It contributes much to our safety, and is a shelter to us from the storms of trouble, and its scorching heat; *it is a shadow*, so the word is, *as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land*. *Wisdom is a defence, and money*, i. e. *as money is a defence*: As a rich man makes his wealth, so a wise man makes his wisdom a strong city. *In the shadow of wisdom* (so the words run) *and in the shadow of money* there is safety. He puts wisdom and money together, to confirm what he had said before, that *wisdom is good with an inheritance*: Wisdom is as a wall, and money may serve as a thorn-hedge, which protects the field.

4. It is joy and true happiness to a man: This is *the excellency of knowledge*, divine knowledge, not only above money, but above wisdom too, human wisdom, *the wisdom of this world*, that it *gives life to them that have it*. *The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom*, and that is life, it prolongeth life: Mens wealth exposeth their lives, but their wisdom protects them: Nay, whereas wealth will not lengthen out the natural life, true wisdom will give spiritual life, the earnest of eternal life; so much *better is it to get wisdom than gold*!

5. It will put strength into a man, and be his stay and support, *ver. 19.* *Wisdom strengtheneth the wise*, strengthens their spirits, and makes them bold and resolute, by keeping them always on sure grounds; it strengthens their interest, and gains them friends and reputation; it strengthens them for their services, under their sufferings, and against the attacks that are made upon them, *more than ten mighty men*, great commanders, *strengthen the city*. They that are truly wise and good are taken under God's protection, and there are safer, than if ten of the mightiest men in the city, men of the greatest power and interest, should undertake to secure them, and become their patrons.

(2.) Some of the precepts of wisdom, that wisdom which will be of so much advantage to us.

1. We must have an eye to God, and to his hand, in every thing that befalls us, *ver. 13.* *Consider the work of God*. To silence our complaints concerning cross events, let us consider the hand of God in them, and not open our mouths against that which is his doing: Look upon the disposal of our condition, and all the circumstances of it, as *the work of God*, and consider it as the product of his eternal counsel, which is fulfilled in every thing that befalls us: Consider that every work of God is wise, and just, and good, and there is an admirable beauty and harmony in his works, and all will appear at last to have been for the best: Let us therefore give him the glory of all his works concerning us, and study to answer his designs in them. *Consider the work of God*, as that which we cannot make any alteration of: *Who can make that straight which he hath made crooked? Who can change the nature of things from what is settled by the God of nature?* If he speak trouble, who can make peace? And if he hedge up the way with thorns, who can get forward? If desolating judgments go forth with commission, who can put a stop to them? Since therefore we cannot mend God's work, we ought to make the best of it.

2. We must accommodate ourselves to the various dispensations of providence that are concerning us, and do the work and duty of the day in its day, *ver. 14.* Observe,

(1.) How the appointments and events of providence are counterchanged. In this world, at the same time, some are in prosperity, others are in adversity; the same persons at one time are in great prosperity, at another time in great adversity; nay, one event prosperous, and another grievous, may occur to the same person,

at the same time; both come from the hand of God; *out of his mouth both evil and good proceed*, Isa. xlv. 7. and *he hath set the one over against the other*; so that there is a very short and easy passage between them; and they are a foil to each other; day and night, summer and winter, are set *the one over against the other*, that in prosperity we may rejoice, *as though we rejoiced not*; and in adversity may weep, *as though we wept not*; for we may plainly see the one from the other, and quickly exchange the one for the other; and it is *to the end that man may find nothing after him*, i. e. that he may not be at any certainty concerning future events, or the continuance of the present scene, but may live in a dependence upon providence, and be ready for whatever happens. Or, that man may find nothing in the work of God which he can pretend to amend.

(2.) How we must comply with the will of God in events of both kinds. Our religion in general must be the same in all conditions, but the particular instances and exercises of it must vary, as our outward condition doth, that we may *walk after the Lord*.

1. In a day of prosperity (and it is but a day) we must be joyful, be in good, be doing good, and getting good; maintain a holy cheerfulness, and *serve the Lord with gladness of heart, in the abundance of all things*. When the world smiles rejoice in God, and praise him; and let *the joy of the Lord be thy strength*. 2. In a day of adversity (and that is but a day too) consider: times of affliction are proper times for consideration, then God calls us to *consider*, Hag. i. 5. then, if ever, we are disposed to it, and no good will be gotten by the affliction without it. We cannot answer God's end in afflicting us, unless we consider why, and wherefore he contends with us. And consideration is necessary also to our comfort and support under our afflictions.

3. We must not be offended at the greatest prosperity of wicked people, nor at the saddest calamities that may befall the godly in this life, *ver. 15.* Wisdom will teach us how to construe those dark chapters of providence, so as to reconcile them with the wisdom, and holiness, and goodness, and faithfulness of God: We must not think it strange, Solomon tells us there were instances of this kind in his time, *All things have I seen in the days of my vanity*, I have taken notice of all that passed, and this has been as surprising and perplexing to me as any thing. Observe, Though Solomon was so wise and great a man, yet he calls the days of his life *the days of his vanity*, for the best days on earth are so, in comparison with the days of eternity: Or, perhaps, he refers to the days of his apostasy from God; those were indeed the days of his vanity, and reflects upon this as one thing that tempted him to infidelity, or at least to indifferency in religion, that he saw *just men perishing in their righteousness*, that the greatest piety would not secure men from the greatest afflictions by the hand of God, nay, and sometimes did expose men to the greatest injuries from the hands of wicked and unreasonable men. Naboth perished in his righteousness, and Abel long before. He had also seen wicked men prolonging their lives in their wickedness, they *live, become old, yea, and are mighty in power*, Job xxi. 7. nay, and by their fraud and violence, they screen themselves from the sword of justice. Now in this consider the work of God, and let it not be a stumbling-block to thee; the calamities of the righteous are preparing them for their future blessedness, and the wicked, while their days are prolonged, are but ripening for ruin. There is a judgment to come, which will rectify this seeming irregularity, to the glory of God and the full satisfaction of all his people, and we must wait with patience till then.

4. Wisdom will be of use both for caution to saints in their way, and for a check to sinners in their way.

(1.) As to saints, it will engage them to proceed and persevere in their righteousness, and yet will be an admonition to them to take heed of running into extremes; *a just man may perish in his righteousness*, but let him not, by his own imprudence and rash zeal, pull trouble upon his own head, and then reflect upon providence as dealing hardly with him, *ver. 16.* *Be not righteous overmuch*. In the acts of righteousness govern thyself by the rules of prudence, and be not transported, no not by a zeal for God, into any intemperate heats or passions, or any practices unbecoming thy character, or dangerous to thine interests. Note, There may be over-doing in well-doing: Self-denial and mortification of the flesh is good, but if we prejudice our health by it, and disfit ourselves for the service of God, we are *righteous overmuch*. To reprove those that offend is good, but to cast that pearl before swine, who will turn again and rend us, is to be *righteous overmuch*. *Make not thy self over-wise*; be not opinionative and conceited of thine own abilities; set not up for a dictator, nor pretend to give law to, and give judgment upon, all about thee; set not up for a critick, to find fault with every thing that is said and done, nor busy thyself in other mens matters, as if thou knewest every thing, and couldst do any thing. *Why shouldst thou destroy thyself?* as fools often do by meddling with strife that belongs not to them. *Why shouldst thou provoke authority*; and run thyself into the briars, by needless contradictions, and by going out of thy sphere to correct what is amiss. *Be wise as serpents*, beware of men.

(2.) As to sinners, if it cannot prevail with them to forsake their sins, yet it may restrain them from growing very exorbitant.

It is true, *there is a wicked man that prolongs his life in his wickedness*, ver. 15. but let none say, therefore they may safely be as wicked as they will, no, *be not over-much wicked*, ver. 17. Do not run to an excess of riot. Many that will not be wrought upon by the fear of God, and a dread of the torments of hell, to avoid all sin, will yet, if they have never so little consideration, avoid those sins that ruin their health and estate, and expose them to publick justice. And Solomon here makes use of these considerations. *The magistrate bears not the sword in vain*, has a quick eye and a heavy hand, and is *a terror to evil-doers*, therefore be afraid of coming within his reach, be not so foolish as to lay thyself open to the law, *why shouldst thou die before thy time?* Solomon, perhaps, in these two cautions, had a special regard to some of his own subjects that were disaffected to his government, and were meditating the revolt which they made immediately after his death: some, it may be, quarrelled with the sins of their governor, and made that their pretence; to them he saith, *Be not righteous over-much*: others were weary of the strictness of the government, and the temple-service, and that made them desirous to set up another king, but he frightens both from their seditious practices, with the sword of justice, and others likewise from meddling with them that were given to change.

5. Wisdom will direct us in the mean between two extremes, and keep us always in the way of our duty, which we shall find a plain and safe way, ver. 18. *It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this*, this wisdom, this care, not to run ourselves into snares, *yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand*, never slacken thy diligence, nor abate thy resolution to maintain a due decorum and a good government of thy self; take hold of the bridle by which thy headstrong passions must be held in from hurrying thee into one mischief or other, *as the horse and mule that have no understanding*; and having taken hold of it, keep thine hold, and withdraw not thine hand from it, for if thou do, the liberty that they will take will be *as the letting forth of water*, and thou wilt not easily recover thy hold again. Be conscientious and yet be cautious, and to this exercise thyself. Govern thyself steadily by the principles of religion, and thou shalt find, that *he that fears God shall come forth out of all those straits and difficulties which they run themselves into that cast off that fear*. *The fear of the Lord* is that wisdom which will serve as a clue to extricate us out of the most intricate labyrinths. *Honesty is the best policy*: they that truly fear God, have but one end to serve, and therefore act steadily. God has likewise promised to direct those that fear him, and to order their steps not only in the right way, but out of every dangerous way, *Psal. xxxvii. 23, 24.*

6. Wisdom will teach us how to carry it in reference to the sins and offences of others, which commonly contribute, more than any thing else, to the disturbance of our repose, which contracts us both guilt and grief.

1. Wisdom teaches us not to expect that those we deal with should be faultless, we ourselves are not so, none are so, no not the best. *This wisdom strengthens the wise*, as much as any thing, and arms them against the danger that ariseth from provocation, ver. 19. so that they are not put into disorder by it, they consider that those they have dealing and conversation with, are not incarnate angels, but sinful sons and daughters of Adam, even the best are so, inasmuch that *there is not a just man upon earth that doth good and sinneth not*, ver. 20. Solomon had this in his prayer, *1 Kings viii. 46.* in his proverbs, *Prov. xx. 9.* and here in his preaching. Note (1.) It is the character of just men that they *do good*; for the tree is known by its fruits. (2.) The best men, and they that do most good, yet cannot say that they are perfectly free from sin: even those that are sanctified yet are not sinless. None that live on this side heaven live without sin; *if we say we have not sinned we deceive ourselves*. (3.) We sin, even in our doing good; there is something defective, nay, something offensive in our best performances. That which, for the substance of it, is good and pleasing to God, yet is not so well done as it should be, and omissions in duty are sins, as well as omissions of duty. (4.) It is only just men upon earth that are subject thus to sin and infirmity; *the spirits of just men*, when they are got clear of the body, are made perfect in holiness, *Heb. xii. 23.* and in heaven they *do good and sin not*.

2. Wisdom teacheth us not to be quicksighted, or quickscented, in apprehending and resenting affronts; but to wink at many of the injuries that are done us, and take on us we do not see them, ver. 21. *Take no heed to all words that are spoken, set not thy heart to them*; vex not thyself at mens peevish reflections upon thee, or suspicions of thee, but be *as a deaf man that hears not*, *Psal. xxxviii. 13, 14.* be not solicitous or inquisitive to know what people say of thee, if they speak well of thee it will feed thy pride, if ill, it will stir up thy passion; see therefore that thou approve thyself to God and thine own conscience, and then heed not what men say of thee. *Hearkeners*, we say, *seldom hear good of themselves*; if thou heed every word that is spoken, perhaps *thou wilt hear thine own servant curse thee*, when he thinks thou dost not hear him; thou wilt be told that he doth, and perhaps told falsely, if thou have thine ear open to tale-bearers, *Prov. xxix. 12.* Nay, perhaps it is true, and thou mayst stand behind the curtain and hear it thy-

self, mayst hear thyself not only blamed and despised, but cursed, the worst ill said of thee, and wished to thee, and that by a servant, one of the meanest rank, of the abjects, nay, by thy own servant, who should be an advocate for thee and protect thy good name, as well as thy other interests; perhaps it is a servant thou hast been kind to, and yet he requites thee thus ill: and this will vex thee, thou hadst better not have heard it. Perhaps it is a servant thou hast wronged and dealt unjustly with, and though he dares not tell thee so, he tells others so, and tells God so, and then thine own conscience will join with him in the reproach, which will make it much more uneasy. The good names of the greatest lie much at the mercy even of the meanest. And, perhaps, there is a great deal more evil said of us than we think there is, and by those from whom we little expected it. But we do not consult our own repose, no, nor our credit, though we pretend to be jealous of it, if we take notice of every word that is spoken diminishingly of us; it is easier to pass by twenty such affronts than avenge one.

3. Wisdom puts us in mind of our own faults, ver. 27. Be not enraged at those that speak ill of thee, or wish ill to thee; *For oftentimes*, in that case, if thou retire into thyself, thy own conscience will tell thee, *that thou thyself hast cursed others*, spoken ill of them, and wished ill to them, and thou art paid in thine own coin. Note, When any affront or injury is done us it is seasonable to examine our consciences, whether we have not done the same, or as bad to others; and if, upon reflection, we find we have, we must take that occasion to renew our repentance for it, must justify God, and make use of it to qualify our own resentments. If we be truly angry with ourselves, as we ought to be, for backbiting and censuring others, we shall be the less angry with others for backbiting and censuring us. We must shew all meekness towards all men, for we ourselves were sometimes foolish, *Tit. iii. 2, 3.* *Matth. vii. 1, 2.* *Jam. iii. 1, 2.*

23. ¶ All this have I proved by wisdom: I said, I will be wise, but it was far from me. 24. That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out? 25. I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness: 26. And I find more bitter than death, the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her, but the sinner shall be taken by her. 27. Behold, this have I found (saith the preacher) counting one by one, to find out the account: 28. Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found, but a woman among all those have I not found. 29. Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright: but they have sought out many inventions.

Solomon had hitherto been proving the vanity of the world, and its utter insufficiency to make men happy: now here he comes to shew the vileness of sin, and its certain tendency to make men miserable, and this, as the former, he proves from his own experience, and it was a dear-bought experience. He is here, more than any where in all this book, putting on the habit of a penitent. He reviews what he had been discoursing of already, and tells us, what he had said was what he knew, and was well assured of, and what he resolved to stand by; *all this I have proved by wisdom*, ver. 23. Now here,

1. He owns and laments the deficiencies of his wisdom. He had wisdom enough to see the vanity of the world, and to experience that that would not make a portion for a soul; but when he came to enquire further, he found himself at a loss, his eye was too dim, his line was too short, and though he discovered this, there were many other things he could not prove by wisdom.

(1.) His searches were industrious: God had given him a capacity for knowledge above any; he set up with a great stock of wisdom; he had the largest opportunities of improving himself that ever any man had. And, 1. He resolved, if it were possible, to gain his point, *I said, I will be wise*; he earnestly desired it as highly valuable; he fully designed it as that which he looked upon to be attainable, he determined not to sit down short of it, *Prov. xviii. 1.* many are not wise, because they never said they would be so, being indifferent to it; but Solomon set it up for the mark he aimed at. When he made trial of sensual pleasures he still thought to *acquaint his heart with wisdom*, chap. ii. 3. and not to be diverted from the pursuits of that; but, perhaps, he did not find it so easy a thing as he imagined, to keep up his correspondence with wisdom, while he addicted himself so much to his pleasures. However his will was good, he said, *I will be wise*. And that was not all, 2. He resolved to spare no pains, ver. 25. *I applied my heart*, I and my heart turned every way, I left no stone unturned, no means untried, to compass what I had in view, *I set myself to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom*, to accomplish myself in